Greetings!

Once again the old year passes and a new one arrives. The days grow longer, and, with them, hopes for a new and better year. 2007 is one year I will be happy to see pass. I look forward to the fresh, unwritten pages of 2008.

John Lennon expressed it well in a song he wrote in 1971; that was not a very good year, either. The Viet Nam war was still raging, with no end in site, despite massive protests by Americans, and despite Nixon having promised to end the war in 1968.

> A very merry Christmas
> And a happy new year
> Let's hope it's a good one
> Without any fear.
> War is over, if you want it,
> War is over now.

The political situation is even worse now. Congress is gridlocked, unable to do much, what with narrow Democratic majorities, Republican filibusters, and a president who has suddenly discovered power of the veto. War continues in Iraq, an insurgency and a civil war, and innocent men, women and children continue to die[1] along with the warriors[2]. Torture is not only condoned[3], but praised by Republican presidential candidates. And, to justify our preemptive invasion of Iraq, we have become the enablers of Russia, Pakistan and other non-democratic regimes, as they, too, abuse human rights, all in the name of fighting "terrorism."

At home, it's not been that much better. There was a bright note this year–the birth, in February, of baby Kalyna, to good friend Eva Mykolenko. Otherwise, I attended too many funerals and too few weddings, and spent too many hours in hospital waiting rooms.

My cousin Lisa remarried in June, in Georgia, on the hottest, muggiest day of the year. (She missed out on the opportunity to have free wedding photos by not inviting me[4].) To everyone's surprise, she call herself Mrs. Hawkins (insert L'il Abner joke here) to keep her new husband Brad happy.

Illness haunted my family this year. My mother was diagnosed with endometrial cancer in January; luckily, it was in its earliest stages, and her surgery swill have cured her. My father had to have a pacemaker inserted, as his heartbeat kept dropping to below 40 beats per minute. And my uncle Mike, following in the tradition of his brothers, had an aortic aneurysm repair. It was a hard operation (due to the location of the aneurysm), but he got through it and seems to be recovering handily.

I lost a lot of friends this year. In late winter, my friend Jiji's mother was diagnosed with an advanced GI cancer, and succumbed soon thereafter. Amachi had been a god friend to me in India–she would take me shopping, and patiently explain the complicated plot lines of the Indian soap operas we watched together. She loved her daughters and

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1. Estimates suggest that the civilian death toll is over 1,000,000. We can't be certain, because our government has chosen not to count them. Thousands more have been maimed. Another 4 million have become refugees, either internally or abroad. The land has been poisoned with depleted uranium, guaranteeing death, deformities and cancers for generations yet to come. How can they not hate us?

2. The American death toll is 3941 at the time I write this. For each soldier that dies, another 10 suffer grievous bodily injuries. And many, many more suffer psychic damage (PTSD). In addition, the American military has been destroyed. The officer corps is leaving en masse, and recruitment is down. Standards have been lowered to fill the ranks, allowing criminals to enlist. This does not bode well for our future.

3. While my mom and I were working on decorating my tree, NPR was on the radio. I didn't think she was paying attention to the radio, but she was. When a story about the destruction of the CIA torture tapes came on, she became visibly upset. "What's happened to us?" she wanted to know. America never tortured before. America was known in WWII as being the good guys, the ones that didn't do that sort of thing. "Why now?" she wanted to know.

   My mother spent the war in Europe. She survived brutal Russian (and Polish) repression in Ukraine, and then work camps (and Allied bombing) in Nazi Germany. That was her childhood. The Americans were her heroes. And I had no good answer. I glibly suggested it might be because the Republicans were in power, but I now think that it is more of a Bush thing. Had Bush been in control in the late thirties, I'm not sure which side we would have been on in that war, and how we would have behaved. Bush's granddad, let us not forget, was convicted of trading with-the enemy in WWII; we know where his sympathies lay. Bush may have been Time's Man of the Year (but, then again, so were you and I.....and Hitler), but he'll never win a Nobel Prize (unless Scalia and Thomas award him Gore's).

4. This was not a personal slight, or so she claims. Lisa invited only immediate family, to try and keep things small, as Brad has way more cousins than she does. As it turned out, this was a great favor, as the weather was simply to hot too function, much less enjoy one's self.

grandchildren, had a green thumb, and always fed me well. I often stayed with her in Madras.

In the summer, my friend Loraine's father succumbed to GI cancer as well. He spent the last months of his life in care, and Loraine and her daughter, Lizzie, had the chance to spent a lot of time with him and say their goodbyes. I had known him–and Loraine–for almost all of my life.

Shortly after I returned home from Ukraine in October, Nick Mykolenko passed away. I have known him since childhood. He was my Uncle Mike's best friend, and practically a member of the family. Nick had been battling lymphoma for a long time. He went by the nickname "Boobie," and had been my political adversary for years. We would send battling e-mails to each other, and argue political points at family gatherings, but finally agree to disagree. For all his staunch right-wing positions, he was a complete softy when it came to family, loving and indulging his children. And he loved his new baby granddaughter, frequently traveling long distances to spend a bit of time with her. It is sad that she will never get to know him.

And then there was Mrs. Nadia Romanchuk. She was my first grade teacher in Ukrainian school, and taught me to read and write. She was a wonderful lady and, in recent years had become close to my family and me. We often attended symphony concerts together, and she helped us decorate my Christmas tree and came to my Christmas parties, where she would charm all of my friends. I will sorely miss her.

In my immediate family, medical problems aside (and we had plenty of them), the year has not been a particularly bad one. My parents are doing well for their years, despite a few medical scares and surgical procedures this year. My Dad, 81 this year, doesn't have the energy that he once did, but is still up for woodworking and gardening projects. My mother, now 75, has been slowed down by arthritis, but her gardens, yard and house are immaculate, and she reads and embroiders a lot in the cold weather. Both love seeing their grandchildren, which they do quite frequently.

My brother is still at Ford (fifteen months now), managing to do well in the automotive industry, despite the current economy. He also continues to be a volunteer fireman, making runs at all hours of the night, usually for faulty alarms or minor fires, but occasionally for large blazes as well. Laurie keeps her garden green and healthy and her household running well, and is still working part-time, although not for UPS any more. It must be quite a challenge keeping up with all the kids' activities.

Kalyna started high school this year, and continues to play piano and some sports, including volleyball[5], which she has taken a shine to. She participated in Future Problem Solvers again this year, and her team did well enough in the state competition that they went to the national finals in Colorado. She has a bit of a teenage attitude, as one must at fifteen, but is not totally obnoxious.....yet. Kalyna attended her first school dance this year (with a gaggle of female friends), and looked quite the young lady, what with her coifed hair and long gown. She is still quite the intense student, even more so than I ever was (hard as that my be to believe). And she is a huge "Pirates of the Caribbean" fan, having watched al versions of the films countless times. (Sadly, she prefers Will to Captain Jack.)

Nick, who turns thirteen on January 10th, is in junior high school now. He has recovered much of his energy since being diagnosed and treated for Crohn's disease, but his growth is still lagging a bit. He is a tough little kid, a hard worker, but also gentle, sweet and generous. He always thinks of his sisters and shares with them. Nick's baseball team won their division in their Troy league, and he agonized through every bit of every game. He still loves sports–when he's not playing league football or baseball, he's shooting hoops in the driveway or trying to organize games in the neighborhood. He has (thankfully) given up the trumpet, and now sings in the school choir, which he really enjoys. Nick and I have been spending more time together, watching movies (Simpsons, Bourne, Bond), shopping at Target (his favorite store), and even attending a production of Langston Hughes' "Black Nativity" together. He really enjoyed the show, particularly all the gospel music.

Maria, aka Fuzz, is still a little handful. She is ten now, but still loves all her dolls and other friends, and keeps acquiring new ones, particularly Webkins. Baby Tushta still travels with her pretty much everywhere, and gets her annual wardrobe upgrade at the Harrison flea market doll dress shop. Maria's taste in television and movies is typical for her age, and we rarely watch anything together any more. She has a constant visual diet of Disney and Nickelodeon, watching horrible young teen shows and "High School Musical", both versions, over and over. She has recently become obsessed by Harry Potter, tearing through all seven books since August. She still plays soccer (and is one of the better and more determined players on her team) and attends school obsessively, trying to win the perfect attendance award she missed out on by one half day last year.

As for me, it was not a particularly wonderful year. My health it OK, although those URI viruses get harder and harder to shake–something that would have bothered me for a few days in the past, now lingers for weeks–and the

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5. Volleyball, for some odd reason, is one of the two main Ukrainian diasporan sports, the other being soccer. Every Ukrainian girl has, at some point in her life, played volleyball. Summer camps always had both volleyball and soccer competitions, often with other Ukrainian organizations–we in ODUM would play SUM and Plast. My cousin Val was quite the volleyball player, and kept it up much longer than the rest of us. It's nice to know that Kalyna has a built-in family mentor!

asthma is more pronounced. I spent too much time working[6] and not enough playing this year. For various reasons, including filial responsibilities, I didn't travel much this year. Although my bank balance has benefitted greatly from that situation, my mental health hasn't, so I don't plan to make that mistake again in 2008. I've arranged to travel to India in February, and Christobel and I are already making plans to for my autumnal Australia visit (Tasmania, here we come!). I'll have to fit Ukraine in during the summer, and I still want to pop down to Nicaragua for a bit at some point. And then there's the UP, and a wedding in Delaware.....

I had planned to revisit India last February, to check on my labor unit at the LCECU[7]. Sadly, I didn't get to, but I did get to spend lots of time working on pysanky[8] Instead, my first trip of the year was my annual trek to the UP in May.

Up North

Traverse City: I stopped into Traverse City briefly on my way up north this year, to visit with Gary and Maryanne Hansen. For a retired guy, Gary is hard to get a hold of–he seems to be always off to Africa or Alaska, or on the road with his motorcycle-racing cousin or playing with grandkids–anywhere but home. This time I managed to catch him, and we had a nice day hiking around, inland and on the Lake Michigan shore, while Maryanne was at work. After a nice dinner at home and a walk to their lakeshore lot, we caught up and looked at photos from Gary's African safaris.

Upper Peninsula: I stayed once more with my good friends Jan and Mark Klemp, in their lovely replastered guest room. We had fun catching up, and watching Jan's odd Netflix choices. I had a chance to appreciate Lieschen's fine fashion sense–few teens have her flair. It became interesting to see what she would wear each day for school–intriguing combinations of vintage, funky and ethnic clothing. I loved her Russian fur hat and kicky boots. She has an artist's approach to the subject of clothing, more performance art than simple fashion choice.

I didn't get see nearly as much of Rick and Mary Baron as I would have liked to. Mary was trying out a new type of phototherapy for her skin condition which entailed driving to Marquette (and back) every other day. I did get to see a bit of Maddy, a sweet girl with a penchant for pysanky, cheer leading, Edith Piaf and sad songs. Henry, her younger brother, has grown quite tall and much more serious.

I did get to spend a lot of time with Lorri Oikarinen. We would chat over cups of hot tea (the UP is still quite chilly that time of year), and talk about everything under the sun. When you've known someone for more than twenty five years, there's always lots to talk about–family, friends, hobbies, local happenings. Lorri is a weaver, a quilter, and a local history buff, and has been renovating her and Rick's shop[9] in downtown Calumet for the past few years. She is still trying to convince me to apply for the Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program as a master pysanka maker[10].

I spent a good bit of time on to of Brockway mountain, watching the eagles and hawks fly, and chatting away with old birder friends. Mike Shupe and I spent hours discussing the coming revolution and the evils of capitalism; we both

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6. I'm still working as a house doctor at Huron Valley Hospital, a job I enjoy, although the thirteen hour days get harder as I get older. I don't really miss gynecology much; working on the labor unit and helping to deliver lots of babies every day is much more satisfying than cysts and vaginitis.

7. Low Cost Effective Care Unit, it is that division of Christian Medical College in Vellore that provides primary care to the poor residents of the area. Over the past few years Sara Bhattarcharji, the director, and I have organized the labour unit, trained nurses, set up protocols and procedures, created chart forms and otherwise gotten the unit up and running. On my last visit we had assessed the episiotomy rate, and tried to apply WHO standards to bring it down. We had begun work on revamping the antenatal clinic as well (new forms and protocols) and begun using the new ultrasound machine. Yes, this is what I do on holiday.....

8. Really, what else is there to do in a cold and nasty winter? I expanded my repertoire this year, refining my drop-pull skills, working with brown eggs, recreating hundreds of traditional designs, and getting ready for Easter. I read and wrote a lot, putting lots of updates onto my pysanka web site: http://www.pysanky.info

   I was also contacted by a woman from Toronto who is interested in writing a book on the many variations of the Ukrainian pysanka. She had found my site, and like my photos and writing style. We've been collaborating since on a "Martha Stewart" styled book, which we hope to publish in Ukraine next year. We'll see if anything ever comes of that.

9. When I first met Rick and Lorri in 1981, they were living in an apartment over the shop. It was quite cute, but is now gorgeous, with period fixtures and lots of other repairs. Kara, their daughter, is living in one of those flats. The storefront is much nicer, too, with period paint and windows.

10. I would have to find an apprentice, though, preferably another Ukrainian, and spend a year teaching my craft. That's a bit intense for me at the moment. It is something I would like to consider, though. Anyone out there interested is being an apprentice? If I recall my DIckens correctly, you will sleep on the floor, eat bread crusts and water, get beaten regularly, and work for free for eight years....

agree with Thomas Jefferson that the roots of the tree of liberty must be watered occasionally with the blood of patriots and (especially) tyrants. We disagree mainly on the degree of bloodletting necessary, and who deserves the axe.

Laurie Binford came up about the time I did, and his magnum opus, "Birds of the Keweenaw," has finally been published. I've been hearing about it and watching its progress for several years. Although Amazon is blithely unaware of the book's existence, the local Keweenaw shops all carry it, and Laurie was kind enough to inscribe a copy for me. The birding was not particularly good this year, with northerly and westerly winds, but we got a few nice days in. We were both around for the Second Annual Keweenaw International Migratory Bird Day Festival, which I attended and Laurie mostly avoided. There was some guided birding, evening talks about loons and a recent expedition to Manitou Island[11], and a barbecue with live music by an old time fiddle band. It was fun, especially getting to spend some time with Laurel Rooks, an old friend, and getting to know her daughter Hannah, who moved back to the UP recently. And I even got into the newspaper[12].

I also spent a lot of time with my hosts, Jan and Mark. Jan is working as a full time pediatrician, but we fit in activities on the weekend (up to their camp in Eagle Harbor) and afternoons and evenings. We watched a lot of odd movies from Netflix and tapes from friends. (My favorite was called "Ma Vie en Rose", about a young French transsexual boy and his difficulties fitting into French suburban society.) I had brought pysanka-making supplies with me, and we organized a pysanka-making session one afternoon. The weather had suddenly and unexpectedly gotten quite warm, though, making Jan's wood-heated kitchen much too hot to work in. Instead, we set up on a picnic table in the yard, invited some friends and neighbors, and got working, to the amusement of passersby. Mary and Maddy came, and made lovely pysanky. Jan's neighbor, Linda, came as well, bringing with her a box of diminutive cockatiel eggs[13]. They were a challenge, but a lot of fun to work with. My first outdoor pysanka experience was a smashing success.

Mark, a marine engineer by training, has been a spoon maker for several years. He uses beautiful local wood to hand fashion beautiful (and ergonomic) wooden spoons and spatulas. He gave me a set several years ago which I enjoy using, and this year he showed me how he makes them. It is noisy and dusty work. Mark also drew me a map to the source of the large hematite stones he has laying around his porch. He collects all sorts of minerals and the UP, with its many abandoned mine sites and poor rock piles is a great place to find them. I found the site on my drive back home, and loaded up on lovely black sparkling[14] rocks.

Michigan

Grand Rapids: My first trip with my nieces and nephew finally occurred this summer. Paris? London? The Galapagos Islands? Nicaragua? No, I have offered all of the above, but have been turned down time and again. Instead we overnighted at my friend Beth's house in East Grand Rapids. A lovely time was had by all, despite the lack of dogs (Oscar passed away earlier in the year). After an uneventful drive, wherein I taught Kalyna how to navigate with maps, we arrived at Beth's house. The kids had a nice lunch, and then we set off to Meijer gardens, where it must have been at least 100°F in the shade (what little there was of it). We spent a lot of time at the miniature Great Lakes (wet, wonderful,and geographically correct), learned how chocolate is made, perspired our way through the children's garden, and then went to see the Big Horse, the highlight of the gardens. Then we rushed back indoors to enjoy the relative coolness and comfort of the orchid and cactus hot houses.

Beth and Dave's house was kid heaven. Pizza for dinner. A trip to the air-conditioned movies to see "Pirates of the

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11. It's long been a puzzle as to whether the raptors actually cross lake Superior once they fly over Brockway Mountain and out onto Lake Superior. A group of birders spent a few weeks camped off Manitou, which is just off the point of the Keweenaw peninsula, observing bird flight paths. Many of the smaller birds turned back, but some seemed to go on across to the east. They think that the birds are heading to Michipicoten Island in Ontario. And expedition is planned for next year to Canada to test this theory. You can read about it here: **http://tinyurl.com/yq4d98**

12. There was a very young looking male at the Manitou talk, listening and taking notes furiously. It seems he was a reporter for the local newspaper, the Daily Mining Gazette. Afterwards, he asked me where I was from and what I though of it. I chatted with him a bit and expressed a few opinions. The next day, I found his article in the newspaper. What did he quote from all I told him? "I liked the talk. It was fun." It made me sound absolutely semi-literate.

13. Linda had had two cockatiels, and the male of the pair died unexpectedly. The female, apparently in grief, started laying lots and lots of eggs. Linda had saved these, and brought them with her to share. You can see photos from this session and the pysanky we created on my site: **http://web.mac.com/lubap/Around_the_World/UP.html**

14. An aside to rock hounds–don't go looking for hematite in cloudy weather. You really need a bit of sunshine to bring out the sparkle so you can locate it among the other rocks in a huge pile. I thought at first I must be in the wrong place; it wasn't until the sun came out that I realized how much of the hematite there was all around me. Mark tells he he once brought a few boxes of small stones back with him, and used them to fill out the driveway. The sparking stones proved irresistible to local kids, and soon the rocks became scattered throughout Laurium town.

Caribbean 3." and then lots and lots of snacks[15] as we watch "National Treasure" on TiVo. The kids can't wait to go back.

Harrison, MI: We took our annual trip to Harrison a bit late this year, as Bill and Laurie had other plans for the Fourth this year. Bill is now working for Ford, and has little of a choice as to when his vacations are. All of Ford takes the week of the 4th off, so they went to Maine on their summer vacation and had a very nice time, even if they never made it to Cabot Cove.

We spent the weekend with my parents, and Bill's friends Pam and Jack. It was a quiet weekend, as there were not as many fireworks available for sale in town (unlike 2006, with our nightly fireworks displays), and we took what we could get. We had a fire in the fire pit each evening, and chased the shade during the day. There was much four-wheeling on our trails, and other visits to the woods. Baby got photographed enjoying nature, as she is wont.

We made our annual trek to the flea market to outfit baby in hand-made baby clothes, and even found matching outfits for the bitty twins. The kids played a full eighteen holes of putt-putt golf, and then rode the go-karts around the track. Because we were there on a weekend which did not include the 4th of July, the crowds were smaller, the flea market had many fewer vendors, and the kids had the go-kart track to themselves[16]. It was nice and quiet. And, on our way home, we drove the back roads to the Elbow lake Inn, where we watched hummingbirds at the feeder, ate cheeseburgers, and played a table-top version of shuffleboard (at which I lost horribly).

UKRAINE

There was no UCARE summer camp this year so, instead, I went on a UCARE Route in September of this year. Because of this, for the first time in ten years, I got to spend the whole month of August at home. I looked forward to it for months–sunny days at the beach, pleasant evenings on the patio, time puttering in the garden. If only it had been so. August is a miserable, miserable month in Michigan–hot and muggy, rainy and buggy. I ended up working lots of hours, and spending many of my free ones hiding in the house from the intolerable heat and humidity, as the garden ran wild. "Bleah" is all I have to say.

Western Ukraine

L'viv: I began with a week in L'viv, which I reached on the new "express" train. There are true expresses that run from Kyiv to Odessa and Kharkiv, zooming along on new tracks at rapid rates of speed. This train, however, rattled along on the old tracks, albeit with fewer stops, and was only an hour or two faster than the night train, and I was awake the entire time. Not just awake, but crammed into a row with a family of four, and with a flat screen TV hanging just above my head and shrieking loudly in Russian the entire way to L'viv[17]. I did not consider it an improvement in the least, although I did get glimpsesof the countryside through the windows along the way.

Once in L'viv, I spent time family and my friends (from my mom's side). I stayed with my kumy[18] Myrosia and Ruslan Zamoysky, sharing a room with 8 year old Maksym. Daryna, 14, my goddaughter, whose bed I was occupying, slept on the couch in the hall. It was pretty low key, since school had started, so the children were tied up all day long. Both Maksym and Daryna attend the English school, so I helped them with their English studies, reviewing irregular verbs with Daryna, discussing English colloquialisms, and teaching both of them how to correctly pronounce English

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15. Beth sent Dave out to shop for snacks while we were at the movies. The kids mentioned that they liked Doritos, Skittles and ice cream. Did you know that there are at least six varieties each of Doritos and Skittles? And that there are four varieties of fruit gelato available locally, as well as the usual flavors of ice cream? It was kid snack heaven for the next several days, as Beth packed the snacks up and sent them with us the following day.

16. Nick and Kalyna have had some driving experience before, but Fuzz was a complete newbie. The other two raced around the track, and she putted along very carefully, being passed up by the others several times. Still, all had fun.

17. En route entertainment is not well thought out in Ukraine. I remember flying business class on Air Ukraine many yeas ago, and the in flight entertainment was a black and white TV set on a table in the front of the cabin on which the crew played videotapes of old Russian movies. Ukrainian trains of the traditional sort, with cabins, have mandatory radio service, often patriotic sounding music. Luckily, each cabin comes with a volume control which can be set to off.

    On this train, though, since there were no speakers in the train, the volume of the TV itself was cranked up very high so that the people in the middle of the train could hear as well. And the passengers had no input as to volume except by complaining loudly to the "stewardess." This is why I carry an iPod with me.

18. A "kum" is a special Ukrainian relationship. Two people are kumy (plural) if one of them is the godparent of the child of the other. You only pick special friends as godparents; often people are closer to their kumy than their blood relatives, as they have chosen the former and are stuck with th latter.

"r" "w" and "h". We also feasted on pizza on a regular basis – home made pizza, which Daryna makes quite well. And without mayonnaise[19]!

Myrosia and I galavanted about town during the day, visiting the old city and stopping into churches, museums[20], and book stores. The name of L'viv comes from "Lev," which was the name of the son of the founder of the city, King Danylo Halytskiy. "Lev" also means lion in Ukrainian, and the city is adorned with thousands of lions – statues, door knockers, engravings, fountains, bas reliefs. One of the smaller museums had an exhibit on the subject, with displays of photos of the lions, and in the main square were a large number of new lions, which had been painted and decorated by various organizations. There was a coffee lion, a fiery lion, a tiger lion, a mystical eastern lion, a chocolate lion, a folkloric lion, a football lion, and many, many others.

L'viv is lovely city to wander about in. There are all sorts of odd alleyways and passageways, old courtyards and unexpectedly gorgeous old buildings. There are lovely Viennese coffee and pastry shops. And there is the open air crafts market, and handcraft shops. I can no longer import Ukrainian pysanky into the States[21], but can still collect variations[22] on the pysanka – decorated eggs of wood, lacquer or ceramic with beadwork and paint. And I can still buy lovely embroideries for my mother and aunts (and did).

Kniazhe: I spent a couple of days in Kniazhe, my mother's village. Things hadn't changed much in the last year, except for the Russians jacking up the price of natural gas yet again. My aunt Zoya had gotten a new gas heater for her house, which would allow her to affordably heat only a couple selected rooms, instead of the whole big house. Telephone service was still sporadic at best, although anyone who could afford it now carried a mobile phone and didn't bother with land lines. The cat had two new kittens, there was a new cow, and Rud'ko, our trustworthy guard dog, was still in good form. Nadia, my mom's cousin who lived next door, had sold her house, and was moving to Sokal', the nearby big town.

We hung out, visited, ate drank, and relaxed. It rained and stormed. We caught up on family news. Nothing really exciting, but that's what you do when you go home.

Sokal': is the administrative center for the region which includes Kniazhe, has an interesting museum (run by a distant relative), and is in a region that produces distinctive embroidery and pysanky. But we stopped in to visit with family. Ruslan's brother's wife is from Sokal', and Ihor and Elena were back from Poland and staying there with her mother. We stopped to visit with them and their two+ year old daughter, Yustina, who is quite sweet and very active[23]. Ihor has been doing art restoration in Poland, and was back between jobs. He is a brilliant painter, and many of the painting s in my house are his work. Sadly, he doesn't have time to paint any more.....

Zakarpattya: There are still many parts of Ukraine that I haven't visited although, with each trip, they become fewer. One place I'd been wanting to visit is Zakarpattya (Transcarpathia), the land across the mountains – in this case, on the other side of the Carpathians. It is an interesting area, ethnically very mixed (Ukrainians, Lemky, Slovaks, Rumanians and Hungarians), and the Ukrainian spoken there is a distinct dialect. I had travelled across this region on my very first trip to Ukraine in 1989, when the Soviet Union began at the town of Chop, but it had been the middle of the night, and I hadn't seen anything.

I saw more this time, but only somewhat. Western Ukraine is a very wet area, and more so as autumn rolls around. It always rains when I visit L'viv, and it absolutely poured as we drove to Zakarpattya. We crossed the mountains, and

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19. Ukrainians love mayonnaise. It, like ketchup, comes in many flavors and varieties at the grocery store. They love to put mayonnaise on just about everything, particularly vegetables and hors d'oeuvres. I still shudder to recall the time we ordered a pizza locally and it came adorned with large scribbles of mayonnaise!

20. Myrosia and I visit the ethnographic museum annually, as it is one of my favorites, I love looking at the costumes, the embroideries, the pysanky, and the household interiors. The "tool" section is also interesting, with all sorts of household and farming implements. There are usually special exhibits on – this year we crashed a USAID reception as we headed upstairs to view an exhibit of icons collected by an Australian priest, and a room full of what could most charitably be called sofa paintings. Last year there had been a collection of pipes (for smoking), and the opening of the clock galleries. On the main floor there was also an exhibit of some really beautiful contemporary embroideries, hung on the pillars of the main gallery.

21. Since Ukraine had an outbreak of bird flu two years ago, it has been illegal to bring eggs, even emptied ones, into the USA from there. I still see them for sale on websites, so there must be ways of getting them in, but I've not been able to find any information on the USDA or US Customs web sites.

22. While I was in L'viv I also had a chance to meet up with Svitlana, a Ukrainian-Canadian woman with whom I have been collaborating on a book about the various forms of pysanky that Ukrainians create. She was visiting family in Ivano-Frankivsk and collecting more material. Svitlana is putting together a lovely coffee table type book, and I am providing many of the photos, and all of the English text. Whether we ever get published is another matter.....

23. She also has cerebral palsy, and is undergoing all sort of therapies to strengthen her legs and improve her motor skills. She had surgery last year to correct her hydrocephalus, and seems to be doing very well, although not yet walking as such.

drove through the rolling countryside. We stopped to sight-see in the city of Mukacheve, at the "Palanok" castle, a medieval fortress high on a hill, overlooking the town. It is nicely restored, and has nice views from the wall. Maksym particularly liked the dungeon, Daryna like the well and the statue whose finger you had to pull for good luck, and I enjoyed the general ambience of the place. There were many small museum displays, both of the history of the building, ethnographic materials, and taxidermy.

We drove further along the Tysa river, which forms the border with Rumania, and stopped at a border post to have our picture taken with our feet in both countries. Rumanian looked quite lovely – the mountains seemed higher, and the forests more lush, just across the border. Villages in this area tend to be ethnic in nature – mostly Rumanian, or mostly Hungarian, or mostly Ukrainian. We saw many well built towns, and visited a lovely wooden Rumanian church, all dark wood, with tall wooden towers.

We spent the night at the "Grand" Hotel in Velyki Bychkiv, and the following morning found the local internat. My stated reason for visiting this area was to deliver photos to kids from last year's camp. I had also bought chocolate bars at the Ukrainian version of Costco in L'viv, so I had gifts for everyone. The staff found the director for me, who rounded up most of the kids; we hugged and greeted, and then I handed out photo albums. They were all quite happy to receive them, and eager to look them over. We chatted a bit, and then they went off to their classes. The staff found Pani Nadia for me, the doctor who had come to camp with the kids. She was a big help to us last year, and it was so nice to see her and catch up over tea and breakfast.

We next stopep in Dilove, a village on the Tysa and near the city of Rakhiv. In 1887 Austro-Hungarian geographers carried out some calculations and determined that the geographical center of Europe was located at 48°45'N, 18°55'E. There, in Dilove, they placed a monument on which is inscribed in Latin: "Locus Perennis Dilicentissime cum libella librationis quae est in Austria et Hungaria confectacum mensura gradum meridionalium et paralleloumierum Europeum. MD CCC LXXXVII." The Soviets later added another marker, and someone since has built a bar/restaurant/museum/tourist complex/car park. Sadly, or not, we were there in the off season and there wasn't much activity. The bar/museum did have a fine collection of door keys and flat irons, though.

We drove on through beautiful, if quite wet scenery, deeper into the mountains, and soon arrived in Vorohta, where I had spent eight summers at camp. We stopped in to see my friend, the doctor/chauffeur/mushroom hunter Slavyk. in his flat just near the town school. It was full of mushrooms in varying stages of preparation, both dried and marinated. Slavyk treated us to tea and chocolates, and spoke at length about all things mushroom. He has been my mushroom connection for years, and came through again, but just barely. The mushrooms were quite late this year, the harvest had been poor, and only in the past week or two had he found them in any numbers.

We kept driving through the mountains, along the river Prut, bringing back memories[24], stopping to shop at the market in Yaremche[25], and then heading on to the long road home to L'viv.

Kyiv

Once I returned to Kyiv after my sojourn in L'viv, it was mostly work and little play. Irka, Peggy and Nellie had flown in from the States, and there was a lot of UCARE work to be done. Peggy and I spent Saturday and Sunday interviewing scholarship students, while Irka and Nellie got to work on Route prep, sorting through the items that had been both shipped ahead and brought with them[26], as well as purchasing[27] and collecting[28] additional items in

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24. After eight summers spent in Vorohta at summer camp, I had gotten to know the area quite well, and each corner held memories for me. What I still recall most is the first time Daryna came to Vorohta, accompanying her father when he was coming to pick me up. All she knew was that they were going to get her godmother from America. She sat, nose pressed to the window, and, as they arrived in t he heart of the mountains, looked around and said to her father "America is really, really beautiful!"

25. Handcrafts cost more the further you buy them from their source. If you know the crafters, you can buy from them. If not, there is the big market in Kosiv. Vendors buy stuff there to sell in Yaremche; others yet will take the goods to L'viv or Kyiv. The rices seem to double each step of the way..... I picked up gifts for my nieces (leather purses), some nice embroidery for my mother (sunflowers), and a set of five rushnyky for my monk friends at the Jampot in the UP.

26. We shipped some limited items from the U.S., including 2,000 toothbrushes, dental floss, Crayola crayons, soccer and volleyballs, air pumps, assorted toys, notebooks, glue sticks, yarn and some clothes.

27. In Kyiv, we also purchased two complete sets of Harry Potter books in Ukrainian for each internat, as well as a selection of other books, including picture books, story books, references and novels. Ukrainian books can be hard to find in Krym/Crimea. We also bought beautiful assortment of maps, including large wall maps of Ukraine and the world, and coloring books to go with the crayons. All of the internaty needed underwear for their children, which we purchased in Kyiv. One of Irka's friends, Lida Halinska, drove Irka and Nellie to a sporting goods store to purchase jump ropes, soccer balls, ping pong paddles, hula-hoops and other sporting equipment. (When it came time to pay, Lida also generously donated the entire purchase price for these items.)

28. Maryna, the head of Priyateli Ditey in Ukraine, our sister organization, has developed a network off reliable donors. Among

Kyiv[29].

Peggy is in charge of our scholarship program, and wants to meet with each recipient at least once during their time with us. The program doesn't provide actual scholarships to the participants; the Ukrainian government covers the tuition costs of any children from the internaty, and gives them a small stipend. A very small stipend. Most cannot afford to go to school, as there aren't any real work study programs, and books and living expenses aren't covered. That is where our program helps out. Donors in the USA provide $1000 for their student; this is administered by the Kyiv office, which provides a set monthly stipend, and budgets the rest of the money for clothing, books, food, medical and dental costs, etc. Each budget is supposed to be customized for the particular student's needs. The office provides access to legal and psychological counseling if needed. And, just as importantly, the office provides these kids a sort of home and family. Many come and visit on a regular basis, and call frequently with problems, or just to hear a friendly voice. Tanya, our UCARE representative in Ukraine, gets to know them all, and becomes almost like a mother to many.

Tanya is in charge of selecting and rounding up the students for the interviews. Many have to travel long distances from their school to get to Kyiv, but it really is important for us to help them as best we can, so we can personalize things. Peggy and I met with and interviewed 15 sponsored students, spending at least an hour with each. Tanya sat in on many of the meetings, as she needs to know he students as well. Peggy asked most of the questions, and I translated for her.

Most of the students were hesitant, if not scared, at first. Their dealings with "authority" have not, apparently, always been pleasant, and they weren't sure what to expect. We tried to put them at ease, explaining that we were there to try and help them, not to investigate them. Several of the "new" students were old friends of mine from the camps, including Vitya from Tsyurupinsk, and Tolyik from Poltava, both of whom had been camp presidents. We chatted, Peggy took copious notes, and I took lots of photos. Most of the kids were smiling with us by the end. As Peggy noted in her trip report:

> "The students seemed to enjoy not only the gifts, but the special attention each received. Some of the students also brought little gifts or photographs for their sponsors. The sponsors have told us in the past that they really enjoy the reports and photographs of the students which they receive as a result of these meetings. We believe this is an important way to show sponsors how much their money and support is valued and what tremendous good the sponsors do in the lives of these beautiful young people. "

While we were finishing up our interviews, Irka and Nellie were packing our truck and making final route preparations. Luckily, much of the planning had been done in advance. The internaty had been chosen based on three criteria: (1) institutions which were in a contiguous geographic location (2) that needed help and (3) with trustworthy director and other administrators, so aid would truly reach and stay with the children[30]. This year, well before the trip itself, the selected internaty were sent a Request For Information ("RFI"), in which we requested the number and ages of children at each place, as well as inquiring about their needs. We also asked the director and staff to do some advance shopping, so that, when we arrived, the staff would know prices and where to obtain the items the internaty needed.

The RFI strategy worked well. We had shipped needed items, and bought only those we had to in Kyiv. This meant we would not need to take as much with us. The RFI also gave us some background information on the sites in advance. By the time we hit the road, we filled a very large van to capacity. After some initial doubts about whether

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them are **Kraft Ukraine**, who gave us enough chocolate bars to present each child on our route three of them, **Coca-Cola**, who donated yo-yos, and a personal hygiene products company, **Vladikom**, that donates bottles of soaps, shampoos and creams. The owner of Vladikom grew up in an internat, and can always be counted out to help the children still there.

29. It was not all work and not play, though – Marta Kolomayets, our friend and a UCARE board member, hosted a pre-route get-together for our group. She had recently built a big house in the suburbs of Kyiv (more of a village that had gotten absorbed into Kyiv and is grew and grew), and decided to have a barbecue. Beside our American volunteers, we had office staff, Maryna, and several of our volunteers. The food was great, and company good, but the jet lag inhibiting.

30. Communication is difficult in Ukraine, still, as much due to remainders of the Soviet mindset as to technological constraints. The only way to find out whether an internat would actually meet our criteria was to visit it, check out the facilities, and speak in depth with the director and staff. Our organization is primarily meant to aid orphans, and not just children in iternaty, as noted in our mission statement (below). Many of the internaty we visited were well run and doing a good job, but had few orphans. These are places that we were willing to visit, assess and aid once, but not those we would help long-term.

"UCARE is a non-profit Organization whose primary focus is the children of Ukraine, primarily those living in orphanages and internaty (government run orphanage-schools). Our work aims not only to provide basic sustenance and better living circumstances for them today, but also to expand their options for a better future by providing them with health and educational opportunities. We also try to help orphanages and internaty in Ukraine not just materially and financially, but also by aiding them with staff development and teaching organizational skills."

we had over-loaded the van, we finally pulled out of Kyiv, with groaning shock absorbers. We didn't have room for some of the other things we had wanted to purchase in Kyiv, so we made plans to purchase them in larger cities along our route, which, in retrospect, we found to be a good general strategy[31].

The Route

We were on the road at last! Our team consisted of the four of us from the States, Maryna from Priyateli Ditey, our two drivers, and two volunteers. We had invited two recently graduated college students who had been sponsored through our program, to travel with us. Andriy Drofa and Oksana Boyko came not just to help, but to serve as role models for the children, and to explain the sponsorship program to them. They both did a wonderful job.

We first had to get to southern Ukraine. Although I've looked at maps of Ukraine many a time, for some reason I had never noticed that Odessa is almost directly south of Kyiv. I think my eye tends to follow the curve of the Dnipro as it transects the country on its way to the Black Sea. A brand-spanking new "superhighway[32]" has been built from Kyiv to Odessa, and we drove down it, stopping only for gas, food and restrooms. We had set out late, so we arrived in Odessa at night, catching glimpses of it and the Black Sea coast as we searched for the coastal road.

Why Odessa, you may ask? Why not head directly to Krym and the internaty we had chosen? Well, we had a few tasks to take care of "as long as we were in the neighborhood." The first was to visit the internat in Ochakiv, just east of Odessa. Our Buy-a-Bed campaign had purchased 100 beds for them, and we wanted to see how they looked, and make sure they were being used properly.

Ochakiv is a poor town, with poor sign-posting, a wonderful location on the coast, and, I am told, generally horrible accommodation. Nellie and Maryna had discovered one very nice hostelry on a previous trip, Pani Tamara's place. Once we found it, we were and fed well and settled in for the night. In the morning Andriy showed me where a previous team had painted the UCARE logo on a concrete wall.

The Ochakiv internat had once been a horrible place but, with a good director and newer staff, had changed for the better. On an earlier visit, the truly horrible condition of the beds had been noted, and we had promised to help them obtain new ones. The 100 we bought had been installed, to the delight of the children. The staff told us the children had become so accustomed to sleeping on deeply sagging beds that when they slept on our new beds, which stayed horizontal when the children laid on them, the kids rolled out! We took many photos of happy kids on their beautiful new beds[33].

The embroidery teacher at Ochakiv was also delighted to show us all of the embroidery work her children had done since last year, when we delivered a bolt of embroidery fabric. The geography teacher was absolutely thrilled with the maps we brought from Kyiv, especially the big ones. Many of the children remembered UCARE from the 2005 Hearts for Arts program, and were thrilled to see us again. One little boy kept asking for Peggy. We noted quite a few of the heart pillows on their beds. And the staff also invited us to celebrate the internat's founding day, which we learned is an important holiday at every internat[34].

Grimea

Since Ochakiv was only a side-trip, we didn't spend nearly as much time there as we would have liked to. Instead, we

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31. We saved on shipping costs, as we would pick items up and add them as we slowly emptied the truck. We purchased embroidery fabric in Kherson, as all the internaty wanted it. It was surprising how excited they were to get the bolts of embroidery fabric we purchased, but many of the children (boys and girls) do beautiful needlework and typically work on tiny pieces of fabric, because the fabric is expensive for them and there is no room in internat budgets for it.

    We also had no trouble finding nice coloring books, although crayons do not seem to exist in Ukraine. Peggy insisted that we give each child under eleven a box of crayons and a coloring book, and the children loved them. It was amazing to see how quickly the chaos at each place quieted when the kids got their crayons and coloring books. Even the tiniest children immediately began coloring, and that was the last we heard of them!

32. Ukrainians refer to it as their autobahn. It is unlike other highways in that there is limited access and exit, and slow vehicles are forbidden. Unfortunately, that memo has not gone out to the bovine community, and I saw many cows on the verges, and even a small herd of them walking up an exit ramp.

33. They replaced the boys' beds first, which had been in the worst shape, first Every boy we asked said the beds were the best. They thanked us and one boy said he can finally sleep through the night! Ochakiv still needs 130 more beds, which we hope to provide them as we collect more money for Buy-a-Bed.

34. In fact, we were told that an internat's founding day is the most important holiday of the entire year for the children living at that particular institution. The children prepare dances or concerts, and local organizations, such as the police or other civic groups, may bring gifts to the internat or its children, to celebrate the internat's special day.

drove east, through Mykolaiv, crossing the Dnipro at Kherson[35], and then heading south to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea[36]. It was not nearly as exciting as it sounds. While Crimea is known for it's beautiful scenery, said scenery seems to be mostly concentrated in the Southern half. Northern Crimea is flat, brown and agricultural — the Crimean steppe. An occasional minaret[37] and odd-sounding place names were the only clues that we'd crossed a cultural divide.

Bilohirsk: Traveling in Crimea takes much longer than one would expect. On a map, everything looks quite compact, the towns quite close to each other. But the roads are narrow and, as one heads south, the Crimean mountains warp the topography and twist the roads around. The drive becomes more interesting, but slow. So we arrived in Bilohirsk[38], 25 kilometers outside of Simferopol, as it was getting dark. The landscape had turned attractive – there was a chain of hills to the east, with sharply rising cliffs. One of the hills was white, and glowed in the early evening light. The town itself was an old Tatar market town, with narrow, winding streets. We had to find someone to guide us to the internat here.

We had not planned a visit here, but had stopped to drop off some wheelchairs that Maryna had gotten as a donation for a European charity. There had been a bit of room left in the truck, and it was on our way..... Since we were there, we had a look around. Bilohirsk houses 125 children, each of whom has a mental disability[39], such as Down's Syndrome. The children, who range in age from 4 to 18, were very, very sweet, and clung to us like old friends. We were charmed by them. In addition to the wheelchairs, we left toothbrushes, dental floss, chocolate and 15 meters of embroidery fabric. They were very grateful.

Köktöbel: We drove through the night to get to the sea side town of Köktöbel, where we would be spending the next two nights. This old Tatar town has become quite the popular resort[40], with beaches, a boardwalk lined with kiosks, shops and restaurants, attractions[41], wine "tasting halls[42]" and lots of lovely hotels. We had rooms at a a nice one,

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35. Kherson is the center of a huge agricultural area of Ukraine that produces vegetables for the entire country. The climate is warmer than further north, where wheat, potatoes, sugar beets and sunflowers predominate. There are markets along the highway, odd clusters of kiosks selling produce and dried fish. In one area, all of the kiosks were run by Koreans. At that time in September, there were huge bags of sweet peppers/capsicums and onions (especially the purple ones), and caviar in large jars.

36. Ukraine is a unitary state composed of 24 oblasts (provinces), one autonomous republic (Crimea), and two cities with special status: Kiev, its capital, and Sevastopol, which houses the Russian Black Sea Fleet under a leasing agreement. Crimea is not a historically ethnic Ukrainian region; it was settled at various time by Cimmerians, Greeks, Scythians, Khazars and, since the Middle ages, Tatars, a Turkic people.

    The Russians took control in 1783, and began a Russification process. Tatar culture was denigrated, and all of its palaces and grand buildings destroyed by Catherine, save one, in Bakhchysaray – because Pushkin wrote a poem about it. Many Tatars emigrated to Turkey, and Russians repopulated the land.

    In 1944, Stalin deported the remaining Tatars, some 250,000, to Central Asia. About half of them died in transit and in exile. In 1954 Khrushchev transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine, his gift on the 300th anniversary of the Pereyaslav Treaty.

37. The Tatars, like most Turkic peoples, are Muslim. Although Stalin did his best to get rid of them, the Tatars began returning to Crimea in the 1980s. SInce Ukrainian independence, many more have come, and they now number some 250,000. They have been slowly reclaiming their land (with difficulty) from the predominantly Russian population that moved here in the post-war period, when Crimea became *the* vacation destination of the Soviet Bloc.

    In the summer of 2006 there were riots and a rebellion in Bakhchysaray, when the local government refused to keep its promise to take down a market that had grown up over a Tatar cemetery. The Tatars took matters into their own hands, pulling the structures down. There continues to be strife, as the Tatars try to reclaim that which was stolen from them.

38. The Ukrainian name of the town means "white mountain", and was named after the mountain we had passed, a very prominent landmark. The original Crimean Tatar name *Qarasuvbazar* means "bazaar on the Karasu river".

39. When they age out of this internat, very few of these children return to their parents, although many have parents who visit. Although all of these children have less than average intelligence, many are trainable and none are invalids. The educational program here covers basic counting, coloring, painting, embroidering and for those who are able, reading. They also focus on self care.

40. It is quite popular, especially during the annual Jazz (and World Music) festival. We had hoped to stay in Köktöbel again on our return from Kerch, but couldn't get a room because of the festival. Instead we stayed in Feodosia, but came to Köktöbel for the evening. We got to listen to Maryna's son Orchyk perform with his band, Yogurt, probably the only Celtic band in Ukraine. They put on a very good show, and the lead singer looked quite smashing in a kilt.

41. It was a regular Ukrainian Coney Island. There were all sorts of games, including Dance Dance Revolution and a small group of carnival rides. Andriy made us come watch him ride one that threw him up in the air and spun him around. Apparently, on the previous night, on his first attempt, he screamed so much that it attracted an audience. We heard about his travails for days.

42. Crimea produces a lot of wine – it has a nice Mediterranean climate, hills, sunshine, and lot and lots of vineyards. Some of the wine is even quite good. There are now many "tasting halls" catering to the tourist trade. Sadly, despite two trips to

probably the nicest place I've ever stayed in Ukraine. It was a challenge to find at night, as there was no sign, but, with the aid of cell phones, we finally did. It had a large fountain with turtles out front, and (much too) nice furnishings[43] throughout. The windows opened onto balconies that caught the sea breezes[44].

Feodosia: There may be no internat in Köktöbel, but there is one in Feodosia, just up the coast. Feodosia is a pleasant enough city with a very long history. It was founded by the greeks ("Theodosia[45]") and then destroyed by the Huns. It became a Genoese port ("Caffa"), and a large fort was built. It is thought that the Black death entered Europe here[46]. It was seized by the Turks, renamed Kefe, and became one of the most important Turkish ports on the Black Sea. It was also the site of a huge slave market; Roxelana, the young Ukrainian girl who would later become the wife of Süleyman the Magnificent[47], was sold into captivity here.

Unfortunately, our purpose was not to develop a finer appreciation of Ukrainian history, but to work. We visited the local internat[48], which we learned was a center for children with gastrointestinal diseases. They would spend years here, medically supervised, eating special diets, and attending school. The more local students would go home for weekends. Very few of the children were actual orphans, but, since we had agreed to come, we carried out our program.

This program would become quite familiar to us over the next week, as we repeated it in each orphanage we visited. We would first meet with the director[49], and tell her (it was usually a her, but not always) about our organization, UCARE, and what our goals were. We would be offered tea and cookies, and discuss the needs of the orphanage and the RFI they had filled out. The needs would be triaged, and items which fit into out budget (app. $2000 per orphanage) were chosen. We would then shown around the campus. At this point, it would be time to unload the trucks. Irka and Peggy supervised this, and Maryna, Nellie and I would go shopping with the director or an assistant.

Crimea, I've never had the chance to visit one and sample the wares – too much work and not enough time. We did have more than a few bottles of white Köktöbel wine with our meals, though – it has an initial bite, but then becomes a very pleasant wine.

43. The table and other furniture were too nice for a hotel, and we were afraid to use them – with good reason. Nellie managed to break off the handle to the door/window to their balcony. It must have been damaged already, because it's unlikely she's strong enough to rend solid metal like that. She injured herself in the process, albeit just a scratch. Still, when she reported it to management, they had a fit, blamed her, and insisted she pay for a new window. We had to argue, and finally agreed to half the cost. We won't be staying there again.

44. But no elevator or, in a remnant of Soviet-style service, bellhop. It is up to visitors to drag their luggage up the many flights of stairs by themselves. But one must do so very gently, or risk getting yelled at by the staff for marring their beautifully waxed stairs.

45. Ukrainian does not have the "th" sound in its language, and thus not letter for it. Foreign words (particularly from the Greek) have traditionally had the "th" changed to either an "f" or a "t" sound in their Ukrainian versions. Recently, the "f" transliteration seems to be predominating.

46. It is believed that the devastating pandemic the Black Death entered Europe for the first time via Caffa in 1347, through the movements of the Golden Horde. After a protracted siege during which the Mongol army under Janibeg was reportedly withering from the disease, they catapulted the infected corpses over the city walls, infecting the inhabitants. Fleeing inhabitants may have carried the disease back to Italy, causing its spread across Europe. However, the plague appears to have spread in a stepwise fashion, taking over a year to reach Europe from Crimea. Also, there were a number of Crimean ports under Mongol control, so it is unlikely that Caffa was the only source of plague-infested ships heading to Europe. In addition, there were overland caravan routes from the East that would have been carrying the disease into Europe as well.

47. Roxelana's influence over the Sultan soon became legendary; she was to bear Süleyman five children and, in an astonishing break with tradition, eventually was freed and became his legal wife. This strengthened her position in the palace and eventually led to one of her sons, Selim inheriting the empire. Roxelana also may have acted as Süleyman's advisor on other matters of state, and seems to have had an influence upon foreign affairs and international politics. Some historians also believe that she may have intervened with her husband to control Crimean Tatar slave-raiding in her native Ukraine.

48. An internat is, by definition, simply a boarding school. Most of the internaty in Ukraine are government run, and are for children who are wards of the state. Some are true orphans (no living parents); others are "social" or "legal" orphans, meaning their parents' rights have been terminated for some reason. Yet others come from very poor families who have given them to the state because of an inability to care for them.

    There are also specialty internaty. Some are for special needs kids, those with physical or mental handicaps. These children often have parents who simply can't meet their needs in a home setting; others are abandoned by their parents when the severity of their impairment becomes apparent. There are internaty for troubled youth, the sort who would be placed in structured and limited-access "juvenile facilities" in the States. And finally there are the medical internaty, for children with medical conditions who need special therapy or medical care and an education.

49. This being Crimea, very few of the staff spoke good Ukrainian, a not many even managed surzhyk, the Russian-Ukrainian creole that is common throughout russified areas of Ukraine. Luckily for us, Maryna was there to do translation. My years of visiting Ukraine came in handy here as well, as I could understand quite a bit of Russian at this point, and the staff would insist on speaking to me when Maryna wasn't around.

We would bargain, collect the items into our van, and then deliver them to the internat. At some point the gifts would be presented, and chocolates, yo-yos, crayons and coloring books wold be passed out to the children. Maryna and I would fill out inventory lists, official "Articles of transfer," which would then be signed by parties from each side, and stamped with the obligatory seals.

At Feodosia, The assistant director had done her homework, and we went on a shopping spree. We visited the bookstore , computer store, appliance store (Foxtrot, and brand we would soon get to know well) and hardware store, and bargained hard at each and every one. Although this internat does not really meet our criteria (we normally work with orphans), it was nice to visit them and be able to help them out. Although we won't be back, we enjoyed meeting the hardworking staff and helping out some sick children.

Kerch: It takes much, much longer to get to Kerch than one would think, as it is apparently served by the world's slowest train (a full day's trip from Simferopil). Luckily, the road was straight, goat-lined, though a steppe-like area, and it only took two hours to get there from Feodosia by van. Kerch is, literally, the end of the road. It is on the strait[50] that connects the Sea of Azov to the Black Sea, and just a stone's throw from Russia[51].

Kerch is one of the most ancient Ukrainian cities. Archeological digs reveal that the area was first inhabited in 17th–15th centuries BC. In 7th century BC, Greek colonists from Miletus founded a city-state named Panticapaeum (which means "fish road"), which became part of the Hellenistic Bosporan Kingdom. It was destroyed by the Huns, and then ruled by the Byzantines, Khazars, Tmutarakan, Mongols, Genoese, Ottomans, and finally Russians and Ukrainians. It's not a simple history.

Kerch, located near the Black and Azov Seas, and near several mud-cure spas, was a popular summer resort in Soviet times. Despite the seaside location, its tourist appeal of Kerch today is limited by the industrial character of the city and the associated pollution. Its main attraction[52] is a museum of the works of Ivan Aivazovsky[53], whom everyone in the former Soviet Union has heard of and considers a great painter, but who is virtually unheard of in the rest of the world.

We didn't have many opportunities to experience the myriad delights[54] of Kerch, although a few in the group did go out drinking on the waterfront one evening, a short walk from our high rise government hotel in the industrialized waterfront. We did get views of Russia from our hotel windows, though.

There are, according to Peggy's report, a lot of internaty in Kerch. Whether this is because it is so far from the other towns in Crimea, or just chance, I don't know. Our job was to visit and assess two of them. The first, which we, for some odd reason, had labeled Kerch 2, was a special needs orphanage for children with mental disabilities. This school ends at ninth grade, and the education is basic and mostly vocational, with some children going on to technical/ vocational school. This place has a nice greenhouse and teaches children many simple trades.

The children were not true orphans, but from very poor families[55]. Because they come from such a poor background,

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50. This strait was known in ancient times as the Cimmerian Bosporus. It is a dangerous strait, the site of many shipwrecks. Even as I write, there is a search for survivors from the wreck of a Bulgarian ship which sank during a violent storm.

51. The Kerch strait was the site of a huge diplomatic dispute with Russia in 2003, when the Russians tried to build a dike to link the Russian Taman Peninsula with the Ukrainian island of Tuzla. It was an attempted land grab, pure and simple, as Moscow had long questioned Ukraine's sovereignty over the tiny island. President Kuchma cut short a visit to South America to fly home and deal with the situation, and Kyiv sent 14 gunboats and aircraft to patrol the area around the Ukrainian-Russian border, which is found 150 meters southeast of the shore of Tuzla. In the end, the Russians stopped construction.

52. One attraction missing from Kerch is a McDonald's restaurant. They have sprung up throughout Ukraine like mushrooms, but have not made it all the way to Kerch yet. We discovered this fact one evening, when Andriy was chatting with a couple of local boys. They were not happy living in Kerch because there wasn't much there, and what they missed having most keenly was a McDonald's. Somehow, they just knew, if there were a McD's, life would be so much better.

53. Ivan Aivazovsky (1817 – 1900) was born in the town of Feodosia, Crimea, to a poor Armenian family. His parents family name was Aivazian. Some of artist's paintings bear a signature, in Armenian letters, "Hovhannes Aivazian" (Յովհաննէս Այվազեան). His talent as an artist earned him sponsorship and entry to the Simferopol gymnasium №1 and later the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts, which he graduated with the gold medal. Earning awards for his early landscapes and seascapes, he went on to paint a series of portraits of Crimean coastal towns before traveling throughout Europe. In later life, his paintings of naval scenes earned him a long-standing commission from the Russian Navy.

    Due to his long life in art, Aivazovsky became the most prolific Russian painter of his time. He left over **6,000** works at his death in 1900. With funds earned during his successful career as an artist he opened an art school and gallery in his home town of Feodosia. This gallery is now a museum of his works. He is also said to be the most forged of all Russian painters.

54. We did discover one home-style restaurant run by two older women who cooked to order. They were friendly, the food was great, much better than we'd had at the fancy restaurants, and the solyanka was to die for. We were disappointed that we only had once chance to eat there.

55. Because Ukraine does not have special education programs, families must send their special needs children to an internat,

the kids think this school is paradise, even though the conditions are not very good[56]. On our tour we noted large dormitory rooms with wall to wall beds (18 in some), and bad ones at that. Since these kids are used to sleeping on the floor, they consider sleeping in a bad bed with 18 kids in the room to be a huge improvement.

We spent a pleasant day here, as the internat had a pleasant campus with trees, flowers, and a bust of Lenin (still pretty standard in Crimea, at least until the Tatars take over). We were told the kids raise the flowers and other plants in the greenhouse, plant them in the beds, and do all the landscaping and gardening work themselves – useful skills for when they return to the village. Because the children all had mental disabilities, Peggy handed out coloring books and crayons to all of them, regardless of age, and they all enjoyed them hugely. Our shopping trip netted us a heavy-duty washing machine, a water heater, a refrigerator for the clinic, vacuum cleaners, a steam cleaner, and an iron. We opted to have most of these items delivered, as our van was not THAT big.

The second internat we visited, Kerch 1, was an ordinary internat for children without parents. And "ordinary" was a good thing, for this internat had a particularly unsavory history. The previous director, who was somehow related to an important Crimean politician, had run it horribly, not merely embezzling funds and goods meant for the orphans, but mistreating them badly (both physical an psychological abuse)[57]. We had heard stories from the orphans themselves, both at camp, and from the stipendiaty/scholarship students. The students themselves filed a suit in court against him, but it took personal intervention by the president of Ukraine to finally force a change.

The new director is a genial, genuine guy who really works hard to do what he can for his kids. He had take the RFI more seriously than most–not only had he thought long and hard about what his orphanage could use, but he had summoned the vendors to the campus to meet us when we arrived. He had decided that what he really wanted was a new pillow for each of his 300 children, a nice foam one to replace the nasty old feather ones. We met with the vendors, and negotiated with them to provide towels as well. The director then accompanied us into town to shop–he was a friend of the manager of the "Foxtrot" appliance store, so we had him call the man up and get us a really good discount. We purchased karaoke machines and TVs (1 each for the boys' and girls' hall) and a bunch of irons. Maryna and I had to try out the microphones, so we sang a loud and rousing rendition of "Chervona Ruta[58]" right there in the middle. The microphones passed inspection.

We had a nice time at this internat, and were allowed to wander where we wanted to. Many improvement have been made by the new director, but it will take a lot of work to repair all the damage caused by the neglect and malfeasance of the previous one. The plumbing was still a nightmare, toilets and showers both, but a local evangelical group has been helping with construction. The beds were atrocious, and really need replacing[59]. The children (and dogs[60]) both appeared well fed and well groomed. Andriy and Oksana got to meet with the older students, and give a presentation about our stipendiat program; many already knew quite a bit abut it, as a large number of our current stipendiaty hail from Kerch.

The director was also quite helpful to Irka in a small private matter that she had been asked to look into. Some acquaintances of hers from the States had adopted two children from Ukraine a couple of years ago. As they were leaving for home, they learned that the children, a brother and sister, had yet another, slightly older brother in another

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such as Kerch 2, for special schooling. Parents can also pay a bribe to get their child a special needs diagnosis, so the child can be cared for here. When they age out, these children return to their families, often in a village or on a farm..

56. At camp in 2006, we had similar children from Zakarpattya. One little girl was from a huge family, some 12 kids or more. She had never had a hot shower before in her life. She took three or four a day, and really, really enjoyed the meals.

57. From Peggy's report: "The previous director physically and emotionally abused the children and stole humanitarian aid items. As a punishment, he forced the children to parade around naked outside. He also opened a second hand store and sold the aid items this internat received from different charities. Due to his political connections, he was only forced out as a result of the change of presidents and a lawsuit among the prior director and other faculty here. Priyateli Ditey was also instrumental in removing this prior director (Hooray Maryna!). "

58. "Red Ruta," the title of a song by Ivasyuk. A ruta is a flower; according to some sources, bee balm, according to others, an azalea. The song was written in 1970, but has achieved iconic status, and is probably the single best known song in Ukraine today. Every Ukrainian knows the lyrics and music and can sing it at the drop of a hat. At camp one year, on the first night concert, five of the twelve internaty performed it as their piece.

    Ivasyuk was incredibly talented; he not only performed and composed music, including many popular Ukrainian songs, but also trained to be a doctor. He ran afoul of Soviet authorities, who were trying to quash Ukrainian culture and identity, and was found mysteriously hanged in a forest at the age of thirty. His grave in L'viv is always covered in fresh flowers.

59. We are considering adding Kerch to our Buy-a-Bed campaign. Check out the UCARE site for details **www.ucareinc.org**

60. Kids (and Nellie) love dogs, and every internat we visited had several of them living on the campus. The children would feed them and play with them. They were communal pets, and had names. Our Nellie would save leftovers from all of our restaurant and "picnic" meals, store them in baggies, and feed them to any dogs we came across. The dogs at the Kerch hotel got to know her well.

institution[61]. They had neither the time nor the means to find the child then, and bring him home, too, and were now trying to locate him. The director confirmed for her that not only was the child in Kerch, but was at this institution. He brought him in to the office, and Irka talked with him and showed and gave him photos of his brother and sister, and told him that they would soon be reunited. There was not a dry eye in the place.....

The small children, as everywhere, really loved the coloring books and crayons, but what pleased them even more was the playhouse that Peggy had found at a garage sale and Val had somehow managed to ship over. Peggy and Andriy put it back together, and the kids loved it, managing to fit 10 to 12 into the small structure.

The highlight of the day was in the evening. It was Saturday night, so a disco had been arranged. A DJ came in from town, set up a sound system outdoors, and began playing. The kids mostly hung out, but some danced, mostly girls with other girls, and a few boys with our Peggy, Olenka and Irka. When the "break" music ("Free Stylin'") came on there was a roar of excitement – everyone gathered in a ring, and the break dance boys[62] performed for us. It was a lovely end to a lovely day.

Sudak: Sundays are not good days to try and accomplish anything in Ukraine. Many shops are closed, as are most government offices, Internaty included. While the staff will still be around, at least part of the day, on a Saturday, on Sunday it is skeleton staff only. So we decided to take Sunday off, and play tourist for a day. We drove the long road back to Feodosia, and then drove around town a bit looking for our hotel (better to do so at midday than at night). We found it, checked in, unloaded our bags, and then all climbed into one vehicle for a day trip to Sudak.

Looking at a map, it seemed that Sudak would be just a short 57 km. drive west along the coast. But we were back in the Crimean mountains, and, while the distance was short, the drive was not. It was a gorgeous ride on serpentine roads with mountain vistas on all sides. We had to drive around Kara-Dag, a national park centered on an old volcano. The scenery was dramatic, from the road; it is apparently even more so in the park, as this is where all the science fiction movies set on other planets were filmed back in Soviet times.

Sudak is a "townlet" founded in the 3rd century AD, which then passed through the usual chain of control: Byzantine, Khazar, Mongol, Seljuk, Venetian, Genoese, Ottoman, Crimean Khanate, Russia, USSR, Ukraine. The biggest impression on the landscape was made by the Genoese, who built a massive fort on the hill overlooking town. And that's where we were heading.

Maryna had found an English language picture book about Crimea in the bookstore in Feodosia, and bought it for Peggy as a gift. We had all looked through it, and found Sudak to be quite amazing looking: a medieval fortress with towers and battlements on a hill overlooking the sea. It seemed like it might be fun to visit – outdoors, a bit of history, some coastline, dramatic scenery, and a UNESCO World Heritage site to boot. Just what we needed after days spent indoors inspecting decrepit buildings!

The Venetian merchants built their fortress on the remnants of an old Byzantine fort in the 13th century. At that time, Sudak was known as Sugdea, and was at the heart of trade routes in Crimea and the Black Sea region. It was only one of many such forts on the Black Sea coast; there were many battles fought here, as the tense relationship between the competing merchant guilds of Genoa and Venice played itself out. Genoa won, and the Genoese controlled Sudak and international trade.

The town had an important role in international trade, and in the development of cultural connections with a variety of countries. The Genoese period lasted until the late 14th – early 15th century, and the fortress itself was in use until the end of the 15th century, when it was destroyed by the Ottomans. With that act they cleared the Crimea of the last of its Christian enclaves.

Mind you, modern day Sudak fort is a total tourist spot. There is a proper car park, and the cobbled road leading to the entrance of the fort is line with restaurants[63] and souvenir shops. The main courtyard is one souvenir kiosk after

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61. Children from large families often get split up among many different internaty. This is partly due to the ages of the children: there are baby buildings for the youngest, children's homes for preschoolers, and then internaty for school-aged children. The internaty may be all age or limited age, and can specialize in children with particular problems. And then there is the matter of available space. A family of five children can end up split up among five institutions in several different towns.

62. I've seen these guys perform many times, and they are truly remarkable. The Kerch guys would always put on a good show at camp; in 2005 they performed with Greenjolly and other Ukrainian rockers in the big concert.

63. There were quite a few "take-away" shops selling chyboreky, a traditional Tatar food. It is similar to Navajo fry bread, and stuffed with meat, cheese and tomatoes (in various combinations). I bought one, as they looked yummy, and were. The tomatoes are a bad idea, though – they just make the chyborek soggy and leak.

    Tatar cuisine is similar to Turkish, with flatbreads, shish-kebabs (mutton), yogurt, rice, salads and lagmaan soup. Mahmut Tahir, writing in 1879, noted that Tatars did not drink wine, although they produced wine for non-Moslems. However, they did drink vodka, as there is no mention of it in the Koran.

    It was a good thing that I tried the chyborek when I did, as it was the only Tatar food I sampled in Crimea. Weeks later, and

another. Beyond, though, lies the fortress itself, with its its 13 towers, two churches and one mosque. It has been reconstructed in parts, and is fun to wander around and explore. And that is what we did, on a lovely sunny Sunday afternoon.

Dzhankoy: On Monday morning it was back to work for us. We drove from Feodosia to Dzhankoy, a bleak northern Crimean town. The name of this town comes from the Tatar Canköy, meaning "new village." I had known of it for years, as we had had many kids from that internat attend tabir[64] over the years, and I had gotten to know several of them and their teachers well. I knew that many of the children had social/psychological problems, and had heard from fellow UCARE members who'd visited that the internat was in bad shape, but nothing prepared me for the reality of the place.

It was, simply, horrible, the worst internat I've ever visited. The staff were nice, and seemed as though they tried hard, but they also looked quite tired. Dzhankoy is an example of what one should not do when designing an internat. It was meant to be a school for children with psychiatric problems, and had medical staff who tried to treat the children as best they could[65]. Unfortunately, at some point it had also become a dumping ground for children with behavioral problems; kids who couldn't or wouldn't behave at other schools were sent here[66], as were gang members, street kids, those who'd been recently incarcerated and/or used illegal drugs, such as sniffing glue. Thee kids should have been sent to a locked down juvenile facility, but instead were dumped on the poor staff (and on the non-violent children with actual medical problems) here.

One of the biggest problems is that older kids and kids with psychological disorders are not in any way segregated from younger kids and kids who seem normal or at least not aggressive[67]. This creates a Lord of the Flies[68] atmosphere. Both the staff and younger, weaker and less aggressive children are terrorized by the older, stronger and more aggressive children. The staff does little to stop bad behavior, because they are (justifiably) afraid of the children.

All of the children here have some form of orphan status, and they typically do not attend college or trade school after leaving. Dzhankoy has a vocational education program through the 9th grade where the children can learn a trade such as painter, plasterer or construction.

The internat itself is in horrible shape. The perimeter fence had huge gaps, there were no guards, armed or otherwise, only a group of (mostly) female teachers and support staff. Kids come and go as they please. People can just walk in off of the street to deal and use drugs on the grounds, and they do. The city of Dzhankoy is a major illegal drug center in Ukrain,e and drug use is rampant, so drugs are a major problem for this internat as well.

The entire internat was swarming with mosquitoes, it seemed that nearly every window at the back of the huge dormitory building was broken out. There were also at least two locations where there were really big holes in the dormitory building's foundation, such that a person could practically just walk into the building's basement. The grounds were also covered with broken glass, old tires, trash and a lot of disgusting debris.

We did what little we could to help. The director asked if we could get them a set of quilted mattresses – many of the

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just prior to my departure from Kyiv, I treated Andriy to lunch on the Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kyiv, at an outdoor cafe. We opened the menu to discover that it was a Crimean restaurant, and went on to have a lovely Tatar meal.

64. We often joked that the kids who were sent to camp from the internaty were either the very best or the very worst the internat had to offer. In many, the children competed all year to see who would be able to attend. In others, or so it seemed to us, the director would pack off the absolute worse students so as to be rid of them for two whole weeks. We were never sure which Dzhankoy was.....

65. Per Peggy's report (she takes very good notes): "This place has one psychiatrist, one psychologist and one social worker. We were told every child here receives psychotropic medications, although not every child receives these medications every day, which is the Western standard of care. They also send some kids to a hospital in Simferopil for a regimen of psychiatric medications." There is also individual and group therapy.

66. As Peggy notes, "Distressingly, Maryna said that if a teacher just randomly does not like a child, that child could get a junk diagnosis, such as 'neurasthenia,' then get shipped to Dhzankoy.....We saw quite a few tiny little children, maybe age 4 or 5, who we thought could not possibly have done anything to deserve being sent here. They may have some behavior issues that are not readily apparent, or there may just not be a good reason for them to be here. In either case, we felt awful for these little ones, who will be victimized by the older, more aggressive children."

67. Another problem is the gender imbalance: 75% of the kids are boys. Staff noted that they have constant problems with the boys, who have more personality and behavior problems, such as ADD. Only 25% are girls, and some classes have only one or two girls.

68. As Peggy noted: "This is a very rough place. The older, bigger children beat up the smaller children and take things from them. We saw several small children with cuts on their heads and faces, which looked as if they had been hit. Many of the children here are aggressive.....We saw three kids hit one child and kick him in the stomach. One boy, who looked about 10 years old, made sexually explicit statements, *in English*, to us. Another boy (possibly the same one) ripped a box of yo-yos out of Irka's arms, and ran off with it. The staff did nothing."

kids are bed-wetters, and these thin mattresses can be properly washed[69]. In addition to underclothing and the other things we brought from Kyiv, we purchased a water heater for the kitchen, three vacuum cleaners, and books for the library, including two encyclopedias and lots of small text books.

Not everything was horrible. The staff were pleasant, well-meaning and hard-working. Many of the children were pleasant and nice to talk to. Two particularly sweet young boys, who live at the internat but attend the local public school and take music lessons there, played several musical pieces for us.

We had been scheduled to spend the night there, but it soon became evident that this would not be a good idea. Several of the children tried to vandalize the vans – we had to stop the kids from hitting the windows, pulling on the window latches and generally pulling the vans apart. Our drivers, both of whom were in the Ukrainian army, were concerned nothing would be left of the vans by the next morning, and would not stay the night anywhere in the city of Dzhankoy[70], much less the internat. So we spent half the night on the road, leaving Crimea and heading back to the Ukrainian mainland, finally stopping at the next city of any size, Zaporizhia, where Tanya, via telephone, had found us rooms at a government hotel. We slept well and long that night.

Eastern Ukraine

After Dzhankoy, we were back in the Ukrainian heartland, driving through the southern steppes along the course of the Dnipro River. Gone were the mountains, minarets, castles and strange place-names. We were back in land of wheat and sunflower fields, of small villages and blue and white churches.

Khortytsia: We had left a little bit of time in our travel schedule to stop on the island of Khortytsia, voted in 2007 as one of the "Seven Wonders of Ukraine.[71]" Sadly, the day was wet, rainy and gray, and it was definitely the off season. We found the island, which is in the Dnipro river just across for the city of Zaporizhia, without too much difficulty.

Zaporizhia takes its name from the nine Dnipro cataracts (literally, "behind the cataracts"), which were leveled in the 1930s, when the Dnipro Hydroelectric Station was constructed immediately upstream. Its importance in Ukrainian history stems from it being the center of a Cossack state in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Khortytsya island has been continuously inhabited during the last five millennia or so, including intensive occupation during the Proto-Indo-European and Scythian periods. In the Early Middle Ages, Khortytsya was a key station on the trade route from the Varangians to the Greeks. While passing through the cataracts, the Rus would be easy prey for the nomadic Pechenegs. Indeed, the Ukrainian king Svyatoslav I was attacked and killed during his attempt to cross the rapids in 972.

Beginning in the 16th century, a Cossack stronghold on Khortytsia formed the core of the network of forts, which comprised the Zaporizhian Sich[72]. The Cossacks were free men, many having escaped from Russian and Polish serfdom, who banded together to protect their homeland against the raids of Crimean Tatars. Young Ukrainian men would leave home and go south into the steppes to Sich; here they could help protect their homes and families from a distance. The stronghold on Khortytsia was established by Hetman Vyshnevetsky[73]. After Russia annexed Crimea in

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69. We ordered these, for delivery, on our return to Kyiv. We also ordered 160 foam pillows, so each child could have a new, clean, washable pillow.

70. Not that this was actually a realistic option. Although it has a population of 26,000, is a major railroad hub, and has several factories, including automobile, reinforced concrete, fabric, and meat, it has little tourist infrastructure, and there are no decent hotels.

71. In 2007, when all the hoopla was going on about choosing the Seven Wonders of the modern world, Ukraine decided to choose its own seven wonders. A contest was held in July of 2007: first, experts in Ukraine voted for the best historical and cultural sites, and the internet users voted for their favorites. The winners (in order) were :
    Kyivo -Pechers'ka Lavra (Monastery of the Caves) in Kyiv
    Sofiyivsky Park, in Uman, Cherkasy Oblast
    Kamyanets-Podils'kyi Castle (moat and all) in Kamianets-Podilskyi, Khmelnytskyi Oblast
    Khortytsia in Zaporizhia, Zaporizhia Oblast
    Chersonesos in Sevastopol
    Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv
    Khotyn Fortress in Khotyn, Chernivtsi Oblast

72. The Zaporizhian Sich emerged as a defense by Ukrainians against the frequent and devastating raids of the Crimean Tatars. On their raids north, the Tatars captured hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, Belarusians and Poles, and sold them into slavery. Such operations were called "the harvesting of steppe".

    Not only did they fight the invading and raiding Tatars, but the Cossacks took the fight to the enemy, with raids on the Black Sea shores of the Ottoman Empire and Crimean Khanate, where they attacked and looted rich settlements, and also liberated their Slavic compatriots from slavery.

73. It was there on Khortytsia that the Cossacks would elect their hetmans. It was also there that they wrote the notorious reply

1774, the Cossacks no longer were of benefit to tsarist Russia, and became a threat instead. In 1775 empress Catherine ordered Sich destroyed, and it was[74].

Nowadays, Khortysia is designated a national historical area. The landscape is rural, despite being just a bridge away from the city of Zaporizhia. There is a museum (the Zaporizhian Cossack Museum), a newly built reconstruction of the original sich (fort) and, in season, a Cossack horse show. The museum building is modern-looking, nestled low in the landscape with dramatic views of the Dnieper Hydroelectric Station to the north. It also has no obvious posted entrance – we had to wander around it looking for a way in – and a leaky roof[75].

The museum was built by the Soviets as a local historical museum, so it contains exhibits dating from throughout Ukrainian history: Stone Age statues, Scythian period artifacts, a model of the Pecheneg ambush which claimed the life of Svyatoslav (972), and a panorama representing the WWII Battle for Zaporizhia. Since independence, its focus has changed to that of Cossack history, so it now has extensive exhibits from that era, including weaponry, portraits, clothing, icons, dioramas, and replicas of chaiky (Cossack long boats). We asked for and got a quick tour of the exhibits from the museum guide. We didn't get a chance to visit the reconstru"cted Cossack fort, though; it was the off season, and the fort was being used for the filming of a new movie version of Taras Bulba." It was wet and muddy out as well. We did get to see it, perched on the shore, as we drove along the bridge from Khortytsia. I suspect I'll have to return one summer to see the island and the fort in all their glory.

Dnipropetrovsk is Ukraine's third largest city[76], and straddles the Dnipro River. Humans have settled this area for centuries – the first people appeared here 150,000 years ago, and began farming about 5500 years ago. Various nations came through and were assimilated: the Cimmerians, the Scythians, the Sarmatians, the Kipchaks and the Slavs. The Byzantine monks came and built a monastery in the 9th century., and the Cossacks came to fight the Tatars in the 15th century.

The city itself was founded in 1783 by the then ruling Russians as Yekaterinoslav (in honor of Catherine, Yekaterina in Russian). It later became one of the key centers of the nuclear, arms, and space industries of the former Soviet Union. In particular, it is home to Yuzhmash, a major space and ballistic missile designer and manufacturer. (For this reason, it was a city closed to foreigners.)

Dnipropetrovsk is an attractive city. It was built along the Dnipro and among three hills; there are lots of parks and squares, and it is well known for its gardens and embankments. We got a glimpse of the latter as we drove through the city, lovely walkways with trees and fountains along the bank of the river. And then we kept driving, and driving, and driving.....it was a long slog, as the city is quite sprawling[77], and our internat and hotel were at the very opposite end.

The internat was a challenge to locate. It was located off a small street that branched off of another small street that came off a large, busy avenue but was not signposted[78]. It was completely surrounded by tall buildings, and hard to see until you were right upon it. We had to call the director to get step-by-step instructions. As it turns out, when the internat was originally built, it was out in the open areas at the edge of town, but urban sprawl has now completely engulfed it.

It was late in the day when we arrived, so we had time only to meet with the director and get shown around a bit. The

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to the Ottoman Sultan. (Look it up in Wikipedia.)

74. Some of the Cossack officers were incorporated into the Russian army, but most or the ordinary Cossacks were made state peasants and serfs. A group escaped to the Danube delta, and formed a new sich there.

75. A large section of the museum was closed off, and had buckets on the floor collecting the dripping rainwater. It was opened in 1983 as a museum of Zaporizhian history, and was Ukrianianized after independence. The building itself is a concrete Soviet monstrosity, although fairly unobtrusive compared to some.

76. Dnipropetrovsk is frequently referred to as "not the first city of Ukraine, but not the second either." This means that even though Dnipropetrovsk may come second after the capital, it is the center of Ukraine, both financially and industrially. Leonid Kuchma, the previous president, hailed from there, as do Yulia Tymoshenko and Pavlo Lazarenko, the current and former prime ministers, and Viktor Pinchuk, a major oligarch. It was also the home of Oksana Baiul, the skater, Sergei Prokofiev, the composer, and Madame Blavatsky, the theosophist.

77. Older Ukrainian cities are built on the old European model, with a small city center, perhaps a central square, and fairly narrow streets. New construction at the outskirts tends to be huge concrete apartment blocks, and, near the center, shiny new skyscrapers. Dnipropetrovsk was built more recently in a large, open area, and never had to build up. Companies would simply head farther out of town to build factory/office/apartment complexes.

78. I am no longer sure how much of the lack of signposts is due to residual Soviet era paranoia (they didn't want to make it any easier than necessary for invading armies to find their way around) and how much to the high price of metal. In L'viv, as it was recently pointed out to me, most of the old metal signs have been stolen and sold for scrap. The new signs are all some sort of plastic, and have no resale value.

rest of the group was treated to a lovely supper[79] , but I stayed in the office with a cup of tea – something I'd eaten at that truck stop around midnight was not agreeing with me, and the mere thought of food nauseated me. I preferred to remain alone with a cup of tea and near the director's bathroom.... We went over the list of needs that the director had prepared, discussed which were most important, and then headed to our hotel. It was located on what must have been the absolutely worst road in the entire city – long, narrow, and incredibly bumpy. It was a private establishment, very clean, the staff pleasant, and the rooms cheerful, quite decorated, and with full, comfortable beds[80]. After fully medicating myself with immodium, compazine and bentyl, I crawled into bed with a cup of tea, while Nellie and a few others went off to shop at the Ukrainian equivalent of Costco, «Metro».

Our purpose in coming to Dnipropetrovsk was to visit an AIDS internat. Donors in the States had expressed interest in helping children with AIDS, and we had heard in the past that such orphanages were in bad shape and not meeting the medical and other needs of children with HIV/AIDS. We had asked out staff in Kyiv to find such an orphanages so that we could visit and assess it on our way back from Kerch.

Despite our expectations, this turned out to be the nicest internat we visited on this trip. It isn't actually an internat, but a children's home, housing children from age 3 to 8. (An internat would have school aged children attending school on the premises.) Of the 74 children living at this internat, only six have AIDS[81]. The staff tries to raise them so they do not feel as though they are different from the other children. The director emphasized that no child here is completely healthy, but most seemed in pretty good shape, physically and emotionally.

Like Kerch 1, all of the children here are either legal or true orphans[82]. Orphaned children of pre-school age from the entire oblast (or state) come to this home. When they get older, the staff tries to send them to an internat (for children ages 7 or 8 to 17) where they have siblings or other relatives. The staff also tries to send them back to the town or general area from which the children originally came.

Children are frequently adopted from this building, so this place receives more aid[83] than most. This internat receives help from both local and international sources, including German sponsors, local university students and the local bank. They had new playground equipment outside.

Because Dnipropetrovsk and fewer children then we expected and was in the best condition of any internat we visited, we did not spend nearly as much here, although Nellie and Peggy had a big shopping night at Metro, where they bought pens, books of paper, paint brushes, paint sets, Ukrainian DVDs , four vacuum cleaners, 7 irons, 8 tea kettles[84], plastic toy cars, dolls, fleece soccer balls, a puppet theater set, silverware and notebook sets for counselors. How they got it all back from the store I cannot imagine.

The following day we returned to the children's home to meet the children and present the gifts. There was a big get together in the common room; the children sat in little chairs all around the edge. We were introduced, and they put on a small show for us, with poems recited and songs sung. On our way to Dnipropetrovsk, Maryna had called her contacts in the media, and local television reporters came to record some of this day's activities. I was selected to speak for UCARE (everyone else refused, I think), and we learned that the interview was broadcast on local radio.

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79. The internaty, without fail, invited us to dine with them if we were there at meal time. We were given the same food as he children, in most cases; unlike our experiences may years ago, the food was tasty and nourishing. It was good in that we had an opportunity to take a close look at the kitchen and dining facilities. And, of course, we had many cups of tea in the directors' offices.

80. The government hotels often retain their Soviet "Intourist" character, with spartan decor, minimal amenities, and very narrow and not very comfortable beds, more akin to a boarding school than an international venue.

81. Three of the children with HIV/AIDS receive "American" AIDS therapy, which is provided free through the city. The medications are provided by programs funded by the USA, and have come about in great part due to the work of the Clinton Foundation, which has been at the forefront of getting cheap generic drugs to AIDS ravaged countries. In the past the drugs were unavailable to poor children and orphans; now they are provided, and government pharmacists manage dosing and treatment protocols.

82. Children are **true** orphans if both parents are deceased. They can become **legal** orphans when their parents are imprisoned, are unable to care for them, or if parental rights are terminated. Children are also sent to internaty when their families are too poor to care for them or have other hardships, both voluntarily and involuntarily. These children are not considered orphans and can be returned to their families if conditions improve

83. Children's homes are usually in much better condition and with much better amenities than internaty. The staff strongly encourage adoptive parents to give back to the building, and most do, whether out of gratitude or guilt I'm not always certain. Fewer older children are adopted out, so internaty get less such individual aid, although many have developed ties with European organizations, particularly those within a few hours' drive of Kyiv.

84. The children live in 8 small groups. The home tries to be a real home to the children, so they live in what are more like large family groups in separate "apartments" within the building. They eat, sleep, play, and learn within these small groups; the other children and teachers are their families.

After these festivities, we visited the children in their rooms. They all wanted to show us their bed, their favorite toy. Small hands would grab at us, pulling us here and there. Peggy passed out the last of the crayons and coloring books to great and obvious joy. The kids settled down to coloring right away, and our two "students" joined in with them, quite gleefully. We hated to leave, but there was a long road ahead of us yet.

We drove for may hours, following the course of the Dnipro north. It was a long and tiring road, and we arrived in Kyiv in the dark. We were done with the route at last (except for the paperwork.....)

Zolotonosha My father comes from the village of Antipivka, in Cherkasy oblast (state), but none of our relatives remain there. Some, like his family, were forcibly evicted from their house and had their land and all their goods appropriated by the Soviets[85]. Others married and moved to nearby villages. Yet others moved to bigger cities for the opportunity of a better life.

His cousin Lida and her brother Vasyl lived in Zolotonosha, a much larger town, and a regional center. Zolotonosha has changed a lot since my first visit. I remember it, back in 1989, being a dark, dour Soviet town. There were old and crumbling shops, and those were fairly empty of goods. Now the town bustles, with a big market and lots of new buildings.

Still, despite living in a bustling town, their lives remain quite rural. They have an older house, built in the late thirties. It has electricity and gas heat, but no modern plumbing–there is a pump outdoors for water, and an outhouse in the back. They have a small orchard, and keep chickens and pigs. Then again, they have a working telephone, a newer television, and a DVD player.

I try to visit them whenever I'm in Ukraine, and our get-togethers have become a big family event. Everyone who can tries to make it. My relatives from nearby Cherkasy come, and another branch of the family who were resettled in Rivne oblast also show up. We have a full house, with good Ukrainian food, lots to drink and, if Inna has her way, singing as well. Summers are best, as Aunt Tanya's daughter and her family come to visit ther from Zaporizhia, and usually show up. Last year went particularly well, as Vera and Yarko were in town, and we had five boys running around.

But this year it was autumn when I visited, so there were fewer of us. Still, Serhiy from Cherkasy finally brought his wife to meet us, along with his stepdaughter and relatively newborn son. We ate and drank, reminisced, looked at the photos I'd brought, and had a lovely time.

Chernihiv I haven't spent much time in the northeast of the country (save for a short trip to Lyubotyn and Kharkiv many years ago to visit some of my orphans), and don't know much about the area. Last summer, at camp, we had kids from the internat in Horodnya, near Chernihiv. I decided that it might be fun to combine the two places into a day trip.

I hired a driver, bought a map, and set out with my friend Ruslan. We had lots of gifts for the kids – photo albums for each of the campers, chocolate bars for each of the students, and a set of Harry Potter books in Ukrainian (the last volume had just come out). We studies the map, plotted out a course, and set off.

Ukraine is not yet a very driver friendly country. I've mentioned the lack of adequate sign-posting many times, and we had our problems with that. Much of the time spent away from main roads (and sometimes on them) consists of stopping, hailing pedestrians, and asking them "How do I get to.....?" This is particularly common at rural intersections, as there are rarely any signs, and everyone local already knows where to go, so why waste money on a sign?

The maps aren't much better. Oh, they're better than they used to be, but there is still the problem of Russian-only maps (good for those who can read them, I guess), and the lack of differentiation of rural tracks from good roads. I picked a route to Horodnya that would skirt Chernihiv (to avoid city traffic), and it did, but much of our drive was on small, barely two-lane roads. These looked exactly the same on the map as the big intercity roads. Still, it was a

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85. During the period of forced collectivization, peasants were forced to give up their land to the collective, along with their horses, cows and pigs. They were allowed to stay in their houses, though. Unless, of course, they were a kurkul' (Russian "kulak"), defined by Britannica as "a wealthy or prosperous peasant, generally characterized as one who owned a relatively large farm and several head of cattle and horses and who was financially capable of employing hired labour and leasing land."

    My grandfather was a carpenter, and had a small business. He owned two hectares of land, and sometimes employed help. This condemned him in the eyes of the Soviet authorities. First the family was thrown off of their land; they lived with relatives, and then found a place in Zolotonosha. Later he was arrested, and taken away. They never saw or heard from him again. The family had suspected that, like many kurkuls, he had been sent to Siberia. Only recently I learned that he had probably been shot, along with many others, in Cherkasy.

pleasant drive, meandering through villages, with lots of rural vistas. I quite enjoyed it.

In Horodnya we wandered a bit looking for the internat. We found it readily after being told to look for Lenin and he would show us the way. We did and he did[86]. At the internat were given a nice welcome, and my students were rounded up for me. All were there, and we had a pleasant reunion. There were lots of hugs, and a big of catching up. They loved the photos. Then they had to get back to class, and I was shown around the school. It was a nice, well-maintained campus.

We drove back via Chernihiv, an ancient and lovely Ukrainian city. It is large, but not huge, with a population of about 300,000, and is situated on the banks of the Desna River, 141 kilometers north of Kyiv. Chernihiv is one of the most ancient towns in Ukraine. Chernihiv is older than Kiev. Chernihiv was first mentioned in the year 907 A.D., but dates back to the 9th century, and was, with Kyiv, largest economic and cultural center during the Kyivan Rus era. Some legends state that the name came from Prince Cherniy; others say that it owes its name to the thick, dark, surrounding cherniy (black) forests.

It remained an important city until 1239, when the city was sacked by the hordes of Batu Khan. The city then changed hands many times, and was burned a second time by the Tatars. It gained prominence again during the Cossack Hetmanate (1654-1775), sinking into regional obscurity from the 19th century on.

The thing I noticed most as we entered the city center was how many trees there were. The oldest part of the city has been preserved in a park that winds its way from the banks of the Desna and through the city center. In this area there are ancient burial mounds, the Val (fortifications from Kyivan Rus) and numerous ancient golden-domed churches. They are connected by paved footpaths among the golden-leaved[87] trees and numerous flower beds. We wandered about, visiting the churches and wandering thorough them and their museums. It was a beautiful autumn day, and we had a marvelous (if not nearly long enough) time.

Elections: A constant throughout my visit to Ukraine were the parliamentary elections. Unlike neighboring Russia, which has regressed to its historical norm of monarchial rule[88], Ukraine has a vibrant and flourishing democracy. The presidential election of 2004 was the crucible in which it was forged – the old guard[89] tried to fix an election, and the people said "No!" Since then, the elections have been real and have been vigorously fought.

Ukraine is a multi-party democracy with a parliamentary system. The president, Viktor Yushchenko, is the head of

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86. Statues of Lenin often portray him with one arm extended, as if pointing to something.

87. Autumns in Ukraine are golden, as that is the predominant color of autumnal leaves. There is little of the showy colors that we get in the northern and central USA – bright pinks, reds and oranges. October is "zhovten" in Ukrainian, meaning "yellow one." November is "lystopad," "when the leaves fall."

88. Vladimir Putin, the current Russian president, is often referred to as a tsar. He came up through the KGB, was appointed Yeltsin's vice president, and then Yeltsin conveniently resigned. (One wonders what dirt the KGB had on Yeltsin.) Putin decided to restart a war in Chechnya to prove himself as a capable, vigorous, leader, unlike the old, alcoholic Yeltsin, and handily won the next election. And the one since.

    The war quickly went south, devolving into a morass not unlike that in Iraq. But oil prices went up, and Russia, being a major producer of oil, cashed in. Putin found ways to re-nationalize the oil companies, by jailing and expropriating the oligarchs who opposed him politically. This wealth, which was shared just enough with the commoners to keep them quiet and complacent, mostly found its way into the coffers of Putin's own circle (he is reputed to be worth some forty BILLION dollars himself.)

    Putin has kept control by destroying the free press – most television and newspapers have been re-nationalized, and those that haven;t have learned to self-censor. Many journalists and dissidents have been killed. Terror – and the fear of it – is also a potent weapon in his hands. Every disaster is blamed on terrorists, and people grow more afraid and more reliant on the government to keep them safe.

    Putin has centralized power–governors are no longer elected, but appointed. There is little opposition in the Duma, and his acts are rubber-stamped. He controls everything. He can not run for another term, but has chosen a successor. (Anyone who dares run against his man is jailed, forced off the ballot, or both.) He brooks no dissent. And he will stay around, maintaining control of the government: Putin has agreed to head a new political party (which is also suddenly the majority party) and will run for the Duma and become Prime Minister.

    And the Russian people seen happy with this. Some small number dissent, at great risk, but most acquiesce. They have chosen security over liberty.

89. Ukraine had been ruled, since independence, by regimes which merely continued Soviet rule with an overlay of nationalism. When the USSR broke up, all the former communist cadres suddenly became democrats, and continued their oligarchical rule of the country. Under Kuchma, the second president, the government had become increasingly repressive: there were restrictions on press freedom, a journalist critical of the government was murdered, corruption grew increasingly worse, and there was a push for closer ties with Russia and the CIS. Although commerce was allowed to flourish, the benefits accrued to a few, many of whom had gotten quite rich as a result of questionable privatization.

Our Ukraine. His main opponent, Viktor Yanukovich, was Prime Minister and head of the Party of Regions (PoR), which had a tenuous ruling coalition[90] in the Verhovna Rada (parliament). Little was getting done in the Rada, and the PoR was getting deputies (members of parliament) to switch affiliation[91] by bribery and threats (the PoR has strong ties to the Donetsk mafia), so Yushchenko dissolved parliament.

The campaign was on. The main parties all had their own colors[92], there were ads everywhere, and small campaign kiosks appeared, with volunteers passing out posters, brochures, and campaign gear[93]. The talk everywhere was about the elections, in the newspapers, on the radio, on the television, and in general conversation. There were political debates on all the channels, polling data was discussed, and ads ran constantly. There were few concerns about he legitimacy of the election, everyone assumed it would be free and fair[94].

My kumy in both L'viv and Kyiv were political junkies, so I was kept up to date on all the happenings, and got to watch a lot of the television coverage[95]. I got to know all the major players by sight, and found that I liked Yulia Tymoshenko (of the eponymous bloc), as well as Yuriy Lutsenko[96], the head of the Our Ukraine coalition. These two blocs had announced well in advance that they would caucus together in the new parliament, so that a vote for either one would be a vote for both (giving people who were unhappy with Yushchenko a way to express their displeasure without voting for Yanukovych). We followed the polls closely, were on pins and needles, and then stayed up late September 30th[97] watching the election results come in.

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90. The Orange (pro-Western) coalition had initially had a small majority after the 2006 elections, and Yulia Tymoshenko had become a very popular prime minister. Then Moroz, head of the Socialist party, sold out and took his deputies over to the Party of regions bloc (pro-Russian), giving them a small majority. In exchange, he was maade speaker of the Rada. This fractured the Socialist party, causing many prominent defections, and there were rumors that Moroz was now a multi-millionaire. Moroz opposed the snap election more strenuously than most, as he had the most to lose.

91. Deputies cannot legally switch their party affiliation, as they are not individually elected. Voters vote for a party, not a person, in the parliamentary election. Each party prepares a list of deputy candidates. Depending on how many votes a party gets, it gets assigned a certain number of seats in the Rada. These seats are filled with candidates from the list, in descending order. The members cannot switch affiliation except at the time of an election.

    An added quirk is that parties must obtain at least 5% of the vote to get any seats, a measure that was added to keep Ukraine from fracturing into a bevy of small vanity parties. Thus parties might get a larger percentage of seats in the Rada than they did votes in the election, as the seats are split up among only the parties above the 3% threshold.

92. Among the main rivals, Yushchenko's bloc was orange, Yulia Tymoshenko's was white, and the Party of regions chose blue. All sorts or campaign gimcrackery abounded in party colors – pens, posters, t-shirts, small calendars, tote bags. Yulia wore only white during the campaign, with her traditional Ukrainian braid wrapped around her head. There were bits of colored ribbon tied to the branches of trees, particularly along roadways. Driving along the highway, you'd come across long stretches of road with lots of small blue ribbons, as this seemed to be a PoR favorite. Or perhaps it just showed their lack of imagination, as that seemed to be all they did besides put up billboards and glower a lot.

93. There was a Tymoshenko kiosk near my kuma's house in Kyiv, and she collected and gave me posters, booklets, small vinyl stickers, pens, wrist bracelets, a tote bag, and even a few juice boxes. Tymoshenko is quite popular in Kyiv and other formerly Orange areas. (There was a lot of disappointment with Yushchenko and his inaction since 2005, and much of his support defected to her, a co-leader of the Orange Revolution). My cousin gave me a cheap plastic carrier bag from the Yanukovych camp – she apologized, as she didn't like him, but it had been free, after all, and you have to pay for the bags in the stores.

94. It is quite a step forward that the elections themselves were not a huge concern. In 2004 it was the main topic of conversation – polls showed Yushchenko ahead, and everyone knew that the election would be stolen, as those in power had too much to lose should he be elected. And so it happened, and a revolution ensued. There were concerns about the 2006 parliamentary elections, but they went off with out any major hitches.

    There were going to be lots of observers–from Europe, from Canada, and Ukrainians themselves. Ukrainians had found democracy to their liking, and weren't going to let anyone take it away.

95. It was quite unscripted and free-wheeling, making our debates look quite boring in comparison. My kum Dima told me that they had a businessman from Russia visiting their bank in Kyiv. He told Dima that he was staying up late each night to watch TV, fascinated by Ukrainian politics in action. It was a novelty for him, as such discussions debate and disagreement is no longer allowed in Russia, where elections are rote exercises where the people merely confirm the choices their "betters" have already made.

96. Lutsenko rose to fame as one of the Leaders of the "Ukraine without Kuchma" movement (2000-2001, when Kuchma was at the height of his power and trying to get rid of term limits and become a president for life) and became one of the leaders of the Orange revolution, and was often its "face". He rallied supporters and kept the public informed. He was a Socialist at the time; when Moroz brought down the Orange government by selling out to Yanukovych, Lutsenko left the party to help form the "People's Self Defense Movement," part of the Our Ukraine coalition.

97. Yes, the election was held on a Sunday. Countries who take democracy seriously hold elections on weekends, to allow for greater voter turnout. That's how a participatory democracy should function, by making it easier for people to vote and have their say. Sadly, the Republicans in my country spend all their time trying to make it harder for people to vote, because they

The results were better than we'd expected, althogh it was a while before they were final. 99.9% of the vote was counted within the first 24 hours. The remaining 0.01% took some four more days to count, due to irregularities in a few "blue" regions. Simferopil, in Crimea, just couldn't get its act together and count the votes, for some mysterious and unexplained reasons[98]. In the end, although the PoR got the most votes overall, the two Orange blocs together outpolled them. There were a lot of smaller parties, but only two made the 3% cut-off: the Lytvyn bloc[99], and the Communists[100]. The Socialists didn't make the cut, to the great jubilation of everyone they'd sold out the last time around[101]. And our side had gotten enough votes for an outright majority – they didn't need to make deals with the minor parties to form a ruling coalition. It was a pure victory, and we celebrated for days. We looked forward to Yulia becoming Prime Minister, knowing she, a populist, would soon shake things up. (As it turned out, she didn't take over until January of 2008, due to all sorts of shenanigans and back room goings on. Plus ça change, moins ça change.)

Kyiv: Most of the last week of my trip to Ukraine was spent in Kyiv. Autumn had definitely arrived, the skies grew gray and rainy, and the chestnut trees had all turned yellow. My last few days were not, sadly, spent sightseeing or gallivanting around. A good deal of it was spent sitting in traffic[102], which ha gotten exponentially worse since my last

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know that poor and working people probably won't vote for them anyway.

98. Many suspected that an attempted fix was being perpetrated, but nothing came of it in the end. The vote was not close enough that a little bi of fraud could change the results. Unlike, say in Florida or Ohio. The Socialists were kept on tenterhooks, waiting to see if they would make the 3% cut off, and some thought they might be the ones causing the problems. In the end, the Socialists lost and it all remained a mystery.

99. No one cold figure out why Lytvyn had formed party in the first place. It's not as though he had some burning issue he was pushing, or some cause he was fighting for. Many suspected that he was merely hoping to become a power broker, assuming that no bloc would get a majority and would need his support to form one. Then he could sell his party's votes to the highest bidder, and become as rich as Moroz and other former politicians.

100. Seriously, the communists. This came as a surprise to everyone, including, I suspect, the communists themselves. It was a shock to my cousin's husband who kept muttering "How could Ukrainians, in 2007, vote for the communists?" They picked up the votes of a significant number of pensioners, who missed the good old days and feared the West, and those of the nomenklatura, who missed being in power. And there were probably some who fell for their campaign promises of better redistribution of wealth and eradication of poverty, having forgotten what happened *last* time the communists were in power....

101. No one likes a traitor–those he betrayed hate him, of course, but his new allies don't trust him. Not only did the Orange coalition rejoice, but it is said that Yanukovych and the Blues did nothing to help Moroz in this election. They could have supported him and gotten him just enough more votes to get in (he had 2.86%), but didn't. They didn't trust him to stay bought.

102. Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities, like most European cities, were not built with the automobile in mind. There are some Soviet area boulevards, true, but most of the streets are narrow, with no consideration made for parking. This was not a problem in the Soviet or early post-Soviet eras, as no one could afford a car. But, in the last ten years, car ownership has expanded greatly, reaching critical mass this year. Traffic no longer moves in Kyiv, as there is nowhere for it to go.

    In past years, the way to get anywhere quickly was to hop into a cab. This is no longer true, and there are traffic jams around the clock in Kyiv. The Metro (subway) is a speedier alternative, except at rush hours, when it is filled beyond capacity as well.

    One reason for these problems is the lack of good driving skills by most of the people on the road. One way to get a license is to study, practice, and then pass a driving test. Another is to pay someone off. Unfortunately, there are too many of the latter drivers on the road. Add in contempt for any rules (or laws) of the road, and you have chaos....and gridlock.

    Several years ago I wrote that Indian drivers were probably the worst in the world (when it came to observing the rules of the road). I was wrong. Modern-day Ukrainian driers have them beaten. There is no consideration given to others on the road, only for one's self. How else to explain what, in India, I described as the train crossing conundrum: A train crosses a busy road, stopping the flow of traffic. Most drivers wait patiently, but a number of selfish drivers see this as an opportunity to "jump the queue" and get to the front of the traffic. The drive up into the opposing lane of traffic (currently empty), pull up to the gate, and plan to dart across, ahead of the other lane, as soon as the gates open. Unfortunately, drivers on the other side of the train have done the exact same thing, causing massive gridlock when the train finally passes by.

    Ukrainians have applied this principle to any street and any red light. Drivers will try to get ahead of traffic in opposing lanes, usually when there is no oncoming traffic, but often when there is as well. It merely makes things worse for everyone else. One way roads are, for some, merely a suggestion, and sidewalks, if there are no police around, make fine alternative roadways.

    Because of all this derring-do and flouting of traffic laws, and because of the lack of driving skills, accidents are legion. It used to be rare that you would see one; now you see many on any given drive. They are often the cause of traffic back-ups, which in turn cause more risky driving, which leads to even more accidents. The Ukrainian automotive circle of life....

visit. There was still work to be done at the UCARE office in the "Presa Ukraina" building – goods to be ordered for a few of the internaty, accounts to be reconciled, and photos to be cropped, edited, and burned onto discs for everyone who participated (and some who didn't). And, since we are Ukrainian, after all, there were lots of meetings and lots of tea.

And then there was time spent visiting with freinds. Inna and I took Peggy shopping at the market on the Uzyizd, and then had her to dinner. Ruslan also came by the flat with his girlfriend to say their goodbyes, and stayed to dinner. I met with Andriy a few times, and we spent a nice afternoon on he Maidan. I went out to Borshchyhivk,a to my cousin Tamara's for an evening with family.

I finished up my shopping, finding gifts for everyone back home. And there was the big end-of-route UCARE banquet, held at a nice restaurant on the shore of the Dnipro, where we had a chance to thank everyone – students, staff, volunteers and understanding family members – for their help. We had good food, good company, good music, and a very good time.

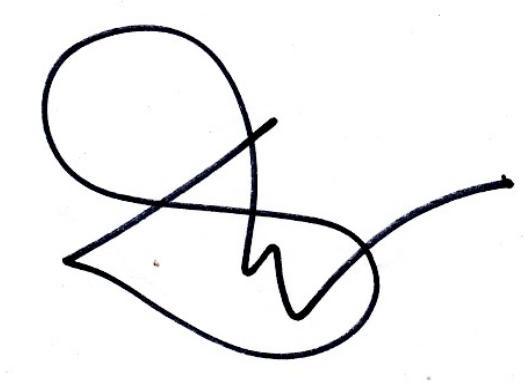
And that could honestly be said of my entire stay in Ukraine.

Another year ended, and a new one begun. So far, the weather has been schizoid, unseasonably warm one day, and frigidly cold the next. The lake and the snow have gone through at least three cycles of thawing and refreezing, and we're in the midst of another snowstorm. Bush has given his last ever (constitutionally speaking, anyway) State of the Union address, and the economy is on the brink of free fall.

Still, we can hope for the best, that we humans do what is right and good, rather than what is merely expedient and profitable, for a change.

The world might have a chance yet.

So, good luck to all of us in the New Year – I suspect we're going to need it!



Luba